



CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OCTOBER 1952



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G. K. CHESTERTON

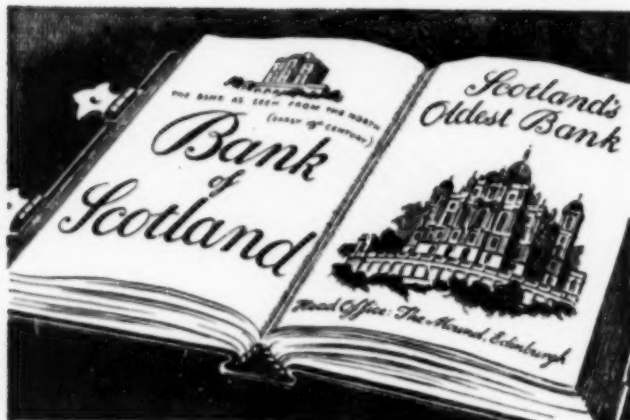


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Illustrations by Ridgway

TO CONTRIBUTORS—All communications should be addressed to:

'The Editor, Chambers's Journal, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh 7.'

Manuscripts cannot be returned accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or by stamps or their equivalent (postal order or imperial or international reply coupon).

Annual subscription, including postage, home or abroad: 26/6 (except Canada, 26/-).

Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post.

Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, LTD., 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh 2, and 6 Dean Street, London, W. 1.

Agents for Advertisements:

England—T. B. BROWNE LTD., 163 Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C.4;

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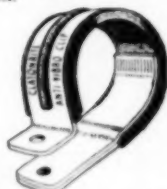
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'IT is not that I distrust thee, noble Gul Khan,' said Lal Chand, the moneylender, politely. 'For what is a trifling loan of two hundred and fifty rupees? Although evil tongues have it that thou art a low thief, I have ever held thee to be the most upright of horse-dealers.'

'Then why not lend the money, O Prince of Merchants?' inquired Gul Khan in a puzzled tone. 'Thine avarice is a byword, and I offer good security.'

'Illustrious Chief, he is but a fool who wastes honeyed words in wooing a barren woman, as thou shouldst know,' observed the fat moneylender. 'Moreover, the loan will be unnecessary since thy future father-in-law will doubtless dower the girl magnificently to wed her to such a husband as thou. For my part, I do not lend the money because I have sold this shop and journey down to the Punjab to-morrow. Rumour hath it that Mir Dil, the outlaw—may Shiva blast him—gathers a lashkar and plans to fall upon us here.'

The sinewy Waziri laughed contemptuously. 'And does this fright thee, O Brave of the Brave?'

'Yea, truly!' said Lal Chand roundly. 'The very sound of shooting turns my knees to water and I therefore go down in to-morrow's caravan to the plains. I need but a beast to carry me and my few poor possessions and I am ready to start.'

The Waziri's black eyes sharpened. 'Then, even if thou refusest me a paltry loan, at least we can do business, chaudri ji,' he said. 'I have just the pony for thee—swift as a young buck, yet as strong as a buffalo. Thou hast but to see him to swoon with delight, for he is a king among horses. Only to thee, whom I hold in the greatest veneration, would I sell him, and my heart will be desolate with his going.'

Lal Chand managed to infuse a cold indifference into the rapid manner in which he chewed his everlasting betel-nut and, after allowing the silence to become sufficiently awkward, he neatly cut it short by directing a jet of crimson juice into the gutter. 'How much?' he asked.

'To thee, Lal Chand Bahadur, I will bestow him as a gift in return for the ridiculous sum of a hundred and fifty rupees—a mere token payment—and may the One God forgive me

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my generosity. Thine eyes may feast upon this wonder now if thou wilt but walk to my lodging with me.'

'It is clear that thou hast gone out of thy mind,' replied the bania sympathetically. 'There is not so much money in all the bazaar. In any case, it is midday and I cannot walk so far.'

PRESENTLY, however, the two were making their way along a narrow refuse-strewn street and came at last to a courtyard where the dealer kept his stock-in-trade—a sorry group of fly-bitten nags. Here the bania at once sat down, because, on account of his fatness and the heat of the sun, the unaccustomed exercise inconvenienced him greatly, so that he blew and sweated profusely.

The tall Pathan gestured grandly towards a coarsely-bred bay gelding with a narrow chest, which stood with drooping head and closed eyes. 'A hundred and fifty rupees and this gazelle-like creature with the heart of a lion is thine, to make thee the righteous envy of all who behold him.'

Lal Chand expectorated copiously and with nice accuracy between the animal's forefeet. 'Thy father was doubtless a convicted criminal to beget a son who delights so to mock an honest merchant,' he remarked at length. 'This palsied thing is not a horse at all, but some spavin-hocked monster conjured up by Hanuman to affright his enemies. Moreover, its sire was a donkey.'

The Pathan smoothed the beast's ill-kempt hindquarters caressingly. 'It may be that there are finer horses,' he said in the tone of one who disbelieves his own words. 'Yet is he strong, O Fat One, and no doubt thy baggage will be heavy, with so much wealth.'

The moneylender's sly eyes slid uneasily towards Gul Khan between fat narrowed lids. 'For one whose mother never had a nose, thine is very long,' he said suspiciously. 'What are the contents of my baggage to thee, O Minder of Other People's Business?'

Gul Khan hooked a horny thumb into the armhole of his once gaily-coloured waistcoat. 'Nought, O Heaven Born,' he answered carelessly. 'Nevertheless, Mir Dil comes and thou art fat and canst not walk. There is no other beast for sale hereabouts, and the price is a hundred and fifty rupees. Moreover,' he added inconsequently, 'thy gold is now hidden in the earth under thy shop.'

The bania's little eyes snapped nervously. 'I do not wish to dispute unduly the merits of this animal of mysterious origin,' he said swiftly, 'but honesty compels me to say that only an addlepaty would offer more than twenty-five for him.'

'Forgive me for thinking thee an amir,' apologised the horse-dealer. 'It is now plain that thou art nothing more than a niggardly beggar and, such being the case, I am generously inclined to accept a hundred only for this jewel among horses which, in thine ignorance, thou hast so grossly insulted.'

Lal Chand indulged in a laugh made the more offensive by the free display of his ill-assorted and betel-stained teeth. 'A hundred!' he guffawed. 'Do I indeed look so foolish?' Then, hurriedly, in order to prevent any possible rudeness, he went on: 'Forty rupees I will pay and thou shalt have the satisfaction of knowing that thou hast robbed me, O Shameless Son of a Jackal.'

'Forty rupees!' repeated Gul Khan with a laugh even more hollow and offensive. 'I was speaking of selling the animal, not of hiring him. Nevertheless, I now see with what kind of snivelling dunghill I have to deal and fortunately have another pony which will suit thy slender means better. There, the white mare.'

The white pony certainly seemed more alive than the bay, since it occasionally mustered the energy to swing its stringy tail drowsily in vain attempts to dislodge the flies crawling over its emaciated flanks. 'She is not so peerless as the other,' conceded the dealer judicially. 'Yet is she strong also and should carry thy treasure and even thine own immense bulk with ease. For her I will take seventy-five rupees.'

Eventually, Lal Chand became the owner of the white horse for fifty rupees and led his purchase away with secret satisfaction. Gul Khan watched his departure with a crooked smile and then went purposefully in search of his half-brother.

BEING now aged fifteen, Gul Khan's half-brother carried an ancient Martini and could place its homemade bullet within a few inches of his target at five hundred paces. The dealer found him asleep in the shade of a high mud wall and kicked him awake.

'A disappointed lover is ever irritable,' muttered the youth ruefully. 'It is plain that

LOAN WITHOUT SECURITY

the bania did not lend the money and there will be no wedding for thee.'

'Not so, Unripe One,' retorted Gul Khan with a superior smile. 'God is Great and devised three hundred and sixty-five ways of catching a monkey. Had I borrowed the money, it is true that I would have had the woman who is said to be a flower for beauty and as strong as an ox, but the thought of the interest money would have greatly reduced her charms. I have done better than that. I have sold the white mare to the bania for fifty rupees!'

'Fifty! He must be witless!' exclaimed the youth rudely. 'In any case, two hundred and fifty was the price the girl's grasping father required of thee. If thou hadst got fifty for the bay it would have been different; it is nearly dead from old age and any price would have been profitable.'

'Thou speakest truth, bachcha. Yet do I yearn to have the girl and for this it is necessary to win the moneylender's confidence so that he open his purse-strings. When thou hast my years thou wilt know that honesty brings its own reward.'

'Why not slit his throat?' suggested the boy helpfully. 'His money must be beneath his shop.'

'For shame, brother!' reproved Gul Khan with dignity. 'I am a respected trader and must think of my good name. Besides, the old fox will have put the money elsewhere by now. I have a better plan. The bania travels in the caravan to the plains to-morrow—so I go also.' He chuckled at his half-brother's mystification. 'Do thou take food and follow in the hills beside the road, keeping ever near, yet always out of sight,' he continued. 'When thou seest me unsling my rifle and hold it over my shoulders thus, with both arms resting over it, do thou send one or two bullets over the fat one's head. He is generous at heart and the loan will follow.' The boy looked bewildered, and Gul Khan's eyes glinted down at him cunningly. 'Do as I order and I will make thee a present of twenty cartridges stolen from the Government. Make but one mistake and pray to the One God to save thee from thy brother's wrath!'

THE caravan travelling down to the Punjab the next day included gaudily bedecked camels, sturdy asses and mules almost hidden

under their loads. Among these walked a colourful collection of men, women, and children of all ages and many nationalities guarded by a few armed khassadars—local Pathans hired to protect the party on the road. In the midst of the cavalcade Chaudri Lal Chand jogged along on the bony rump of the white horse, with his legs dangling down on either side, his enormous bulk shrouded in crumpled white cotton. Not far behind him, Gul Khan swaggered along at the head of his ill-fed ponies, his lean frame bearing two well-filled cartridge-belts and a rifle at his back.

After the midday halt the party moved into more broken country where the road wound among a tangle of brown hills shimmering in the heat. The stony path scorched the feet of the travellers, so that even the more talkative ones were content to march silently, sweating under the broiling sun. Only the crunch of footsteps and the monotonous jingle of camel-bells broke the stillness.

With a grunt of relief Gul Khan eased his rifle to a more comfortable position. The responsive shots from somewhere up the hillsides shattered the peace of the valley. Men scanned the surrounding crags anxiously and shouted to each other. Women called shrilly to their children in a babble of different tongues. Lagging animals being furiously urged to close up added to the dust and confusion.

Again the unseen rifle spat. This time a small wooden box among Lal Chand's chattels jumped and threw a shower of splinters in his eyes. The fat man's brown face turned grey. 'Khassadars!' he screamed. 'Guards! Shoot! We are attacked!'

The impassive Pathans stalked on, superb in their ragged dignity. 'He is but one—babu,' said one sneeringly, 'and what is death but Kismet?'

Some half-an-hour later a further scattered group of shots brought the merchant's heart into his fat throat again, more especially as they were certainly aimed at himself. A canvas water-chagul slung beneath the belly of his mount was punctured and dissipated its contents in the dust, while another bullet powdered a stone on the track before him and whined away into the distance. For the first time, he realised that his was the only white animal in the whole company and must make an inviting mark. He closed his eyes in terror as he pictured himself from behind the sights of the sniper's rifle.

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'Verily it is that mangy white animal,' said a gnarled old Baluchi, putting Lal Chand's own horrible thought into words.

'Ai!' chorused several near-by travellers angrily. 'Remove thy mountainous self and that white sack of mouldy bones also or we shall be killed with thee.'

'It is clear that our loathsome companion and his evil beast are beset with a jinn,' came the authoritative tones of the horse-dealer. 'By his stupidity in bringing a white animal he endangers all our lives. Let him therefore march two hundred paces behind us so that he may reason with his friend who pays him such marked attention, without troubling us!'

'Ai! Well spoken!' cried the old Baluchi. 'Let the fat one fall behind!'

THE frantic Lal Chand everywhere saw stern determination in the faces of his companions; only in Gul Khan's hawk features was there a pleasant smile. 'Nay, good friends, good kind friends,' the bania croaked, 'send me not so far away where yonder slinking ruffian will surely make an end of me. I will purchase another and more sombre beast from the good Gul Khan and this white devil I will drive away.'

To his relief, this suggestion was approved, and he inquired in a strangled voice if the bay gelding, which he had been offered the day before, was still for sale.

'O Prince of Merchants, he is here,' replied the horse-dealer. 'As fine and strong as yesterday, and he is thine for a paltry hundred and fifty rupees.'

'Robber!' shrieked the outraged merchant. 'Yesterday thou didst agree to let me have him for but a hundred. How then has he become so valuable overnight?'

The Waziri spread out his hands helplessly. 'Yet to-day is to-day, chaudri ji, and his price is a hundred and fifty. Perchance,' he added carelessly, 'thou wouldst prefer to leave thy baggage and walk. Thou art slim and fleet of foot, and, as thou sayest, thy goods are but of little value and can be left behind.'

Lal Chand rolled his eyes and groaned. 'O Mud! O Stench! O Misbegotten Son of a Mangy Jackal's Dam!' he stormed amidst jeers and encouragements. 'Thy grandmother was a sow who leapt to death over a cliff rather than submit to the embrace of thy grandfather!'

The smack of another shot effectively cut short his recollections of the other's antecedents, more especially as the bullet entered his ghee-tin and the rancid semi-liquid butter oozed out into his quilted blankets. His grubby pagri fell off and became entangled with his feet as he strove to repair the damage, while the remainder of the party streamed past him. He was pushed by the bulging loads of pack-mules and elbowed by his derisive companions as he dug trembling fingers into the folds of his clothes to produce the exorbitant sum demanded.

'Do not press His Excellency!' Gul Khan reproved a Punjabi camel-driver whose beast made a snarling grab at the sweating bania. 'Do thine eyes play thee a trick that in this mountain of shrinking jelly thou canst not perceive a mighty Rajah? Let not thine animal roll him in the dust lest the honest man pay me short in error.'

'Vulture!' moaned Lal Chand impotently as he hastily began to load the bay with the bundles and boxes from the white mare's back. The change-over took a long time, partly because the merchant spent so much time in cursing the horse-dealer, and partly because his fingers shook so much from fright. When at last he paused to wipe his streaming brow his heart nearly dried up, for Gul Khan was far ahead, hurrying to rejoin the main party. 'O Gul Khan! O Mighty Warrior!' Lal Chand's frantic shout echoed among the empty rocks. 'Do not leave me to be butchered, I beseech thee!'

The tall figure striding in front called cheerfully over his shoulder: 'Hurry, O bania! Hurry if thou wouldst save thy neck—and thy riches!'

'Hush!' Lal Chand's finger was at his thick lips and his eyes darted fearfully over the boulder-strewn hillsides. Expecting to be disembowelled at any minute, he fumbled on with the ropes and straps until all his baggage was safely secured to his new purchase. Then he picked up handfuls of stones and flung them at the fatal white horse until he puffed with the exertion. 'Away! Begone!' he shouted. 'O bewitched, most wretched and illegitimate offspring of a camel's paramour! Most miserable fifty rupees worth!'

When the bewildered creature had beat a hasty retreat, the bania laboriously mounted behind the pile of his possessions and, lashing the gaunt bay into a shambling canter, went bumping in pursuit of the others. After some

LOAN WITHOUT SECURITY

while he came up with the remainder of the caravan and, although he was greeted with all manner of ribaldries, he soon found his spirits soaring as no more sniping occurred and he felt himself safe at last.

THAT night the caravan camped under the walls of a Militia Post in security. Soon fires were lighted, food cooked and eaten, and, one by one, the travellers lay down to rest. They were early astir in the morning and the light was only just beginning to pale the sky over the eastern mountains when the fat merchant reluctantly rolled from his bedding to stand rubbing his eyes and shivering in the keen air.

As his eyes became accustomed to the dim light, he glanced at the spot where he had tethered his horse and for some moments stood rigid with horror, his eyes starting from their sockets. The bay was not alone; beside him stood the accursed white brute in all her devilish clarity, contentedly munching the remnant of the other's feed. As he struggled for speech, a spare figure loomed up beside him. 'So? Thy first love hath returned to thee!' said Gul Khan heartily. 'She plainly loveth thee as the bride of a day loveth her husband. When I have saved enough to marry may the One God grant my wife be as loving as thy mare!'

The bania ignored him and advanced threateningly on the white mare. 'Shoo! Away with thee, shaitan!' he screeched.

Beyond raising her head and returning a reproachful look, the offending animal did not interrupt the machine-like champing of her jaws, but the cries and abuse which the bania directed at his unwanted property soon apprised the whole camp of her return, and in a few moments Lal Chand was the centre of a crowd which followed the proceedings with interest. All his efforts to drive the mare away having failed on account of her appreciation of a good meal after her enforced starvation, Lal Chand appealed at length to the bystanders. 'See, good sirs,' he began ingratiatingly, 'this mare is strong and of a good temper, yet I do not require her who have another. I bought her for fifty rupees from Gul Khan the dealer, for which miserable sum I was fortunate to obtain her as the Pathan rightly holds me in the highest esteem and let her go at a price much below her true worth. Yet will I part with her to any who may

require her for the same small sum that I paid the Pathan as I am a man of good-will.'

Raucous laughter greeted this offer, and a truculent Poonchi in tattered padded waistcoat and astrakhan cap scornfully voiced the opinion of all. 'May I for one be everlastingly sewn into the skin of a pig if I accept a three-legged camel like that as a gift!'

The despairing eye of the bania travelled over the sea of grinning faces, and at last rested on the inscrutable features of the horse-dealer. 'I am a sensitive man as all knoweth,' said Gul Khan unctuously, 'and it grieves me to see thee in this plight, chaudi ji. No one in their right mind will take the mare from thee, even as a present, since she is obviously a jinn in disguise. It is equally certain that thou canst not drive her away and that she will stay with thee until the sniper's bullet ends thy days—for what marksman from here to Peshawar could resist such a target? Probably God the Great, the All-Seeing, hath devised this punishment for thee on account of the extortionate interest thou chargest. However, God is Merciful also and, believing thee to have repented, hath put this thought into my heart—I will buy the mare back from thee for the fifty rupees which thou paidst me for her yesterday.'

A gasp arose from the onlookers and Lal Chand blew through his broken teeth with surprised relief. 'Of a truth, our Waziri is become senile before his time,' muttered an amazed Hazara muleteer.

'O most generous, most blessed Gul Khan, potential father of an illustrious line!' cried the bania gratefully. 'Thy humble servant shall always pray for thy long life and happiness!'

'Nay, it is a small thing,' said Gul Khan, deprecatingly. 'Yet, though generous, I am a man of business also. I shall run great risks from this blighted animal, and it is therefore unthinkable that I be deprived of all gain in the matter. However, through the goodness of my heart, will I valiantly undertake these risks in thy stead for the despicable sum of a hundred rupees—so that thou owest me the small difference of fifty rupees only.'

The light of joy faded from the merchant's protruding eyes, to be quickly replaced by baleful hatred, but the onlookers wildly acclaimed the proposal. 'That is but fair, O Fat One,' cried one. 'Shabash! I should want thrice that amount,' admired another.

Reluctantly, as though he were squeezing

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out drops of his life's blood, Lal Chand counted out the money and thrust it into the Pathan's ready grasp. Then, his moon-face purpling with silent invective, he watched him lead the white mare away.

THAT day's march was uneventful, and the merchant was relatively happy when he was not thinking of the two hundred and fifty rupees which he had now paid for his horse. Nevertheless, his ears were ever on the stretch for the smack and whistle of a bullet, which he uncharitably hoped would herald some injury to the horse-healer. However, as the day wore on there was no sign of this, so that he was quite dejected when the party reached a mud-built caravanserai that night and camped within the safety of its walls.

The next morning Lal Chand, whose knowledge of horses was limited to feeding and beating, was alarmed to find that the bay

was lying down beside his uneaten feed with closed eyes. Impatiently he directed a rain of kicks among the beast's well-defined ribs. A Mahsud, striding by with a string of pot-bellied donkeys, called derisively: 'Thy brains are doubtless in thy stomach, O Fatness. Of what use is it to belabour a dead horse?'

The words threw the bania into a sweating panic and before long the hideous truth was obvious even to him. 'Dead!' he wailed piteously. 'He is dead! Vishnu aid me! How can I carry my goods without a horse?'

A solemn voice at his elbow startled him. 'By thrift and hard work, I have at last saved enough money to marry,' said Gul Khan, 'and I return to my village to-day to arrange my marriage. Being so happy myself, thy distress touches me the more keenly and I would see thee happy also. I am therefore willing to sell thee this magnificent white pony for a nominal sum—only fifty rupees.'

November First Story: *The Hopologist* by Maurice Walsh.

Harkhanger Wood

*Harkhanger Wood
Stands stark and still
Halfway around
Harkhanger Hill.
A chill wind whines,
And mist-shawled shades
Flit to and fro
Through the ghostly glades;
Round every trunk
I seem to see
A half-masked face
Peering back at me;
Seem to hear
The phantom beat
Of the hooves
Of the highwayman's
Horses fleet!
What if the car
Should break down here?
A mocking laugh
Seems to ring in my ear,
And out of the mist,
All white and wan, steps—
Harkhanger Harry,
The A.A. man!*

AILEEN E. PASSMORE.



Hearing with the Eyes

The Development of Visible Speech

LANGSTON DAY

IN New York recently a man who had been stone-deaf since his birth watched a series of luminous hieroglyphics moving across a screen and repeated aloud the words which were spoken by members of the assembled audience. He also phoned his wife and 'heard' with his eyes every word she spoke. He even sensed the inflections of her voice and answered her not in the usual flat tone of the deaf but in a lively, natural voice. For some months past he had been learning to decipher these curious spurts and splashes, or visible speech, which has been developed by the Bell Telephone Laboratories. This is a wonderful invention which holds out new hope to the deaf and opens up many strange possibilities to speech-trainers, naturalists, doctors, and others.

The idea of hearing with the eyes is not a new one. Eighty-five years ago Melville Bell was demonstrating a new system of hand-written phonetic symbols which he had invented, and his small son, Alexander Graham, was helping him with these demonstrations. The idea was to write and read in pure sound, as it were, but unhappily his Universal Alphabetics, as he called it, did not work out so well as he hoped. The boy, however, was so much impressed by his father's enthusiasm

that he decided to devote his life to helping the deaf. With tremendous energy he threw himself into electrical research work, and the result was—the telephone!

Many other people have tried to develop visible speech, and to-day there are numerous ingenious ways of recording speech sounds visibly. For example, there is the sound-track used in talkies. Here all the sound is packed into the sound-track, but unfortunately it is packed too tight to make it readable. Imagine trying to read a book in which the letters of each word are printed on top of each other instead of being spread out in sequence. The problem is how to open out the sound symbols so that the eye can take them in.

During the late war it was found necessary to develop visible speech for military reasons, and the Bell Telephone Laboratories undertook this task. After the war they continued the work, and now the electrical instruments they invented have reached a fairly advanced stage. One such instrument is that described above, in which glowing patterns of light are recorded instantaneously on a screen. Another one makes permanent records on a magnetic tape. In each case the result is a strange series of hieroglyphics, or 'specto-

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grams,' which it is not difficult to learn and identify. Loudness, pitch, and inflection of the voice are all shown by the pattern, placement, and thickness of the symbols. Here, then, is a new alphabet composed not of arbitrary letters but of the patterns formed directly by the sounds they represent.

HOW will visible speech affect the deaf? Since each spoken word or sound has its own peculiar pattern, practice will give a deaf man a vocabulary as extensive as he is willing to acquire. But it goes far beyond this, for it will convey the subtleties of the spoken word, the timing and emphasis which carry the emotional content of speech. This is where visible speech is far superior to lip-reading, for a lip-reader has great difficulty in perceiving speech's life and colour. Inflections are difficult for him and he cannot easily master dialects. The new method, however, fully conveys such fine points and it gives a much wider scope. One deaf man became more proficient in ten months with visible speech than he had ever been with lip-reading, which he had practised all his life.

The new technique will also solve the thorny problem of teaching deaf people to talk naturally. People who cannot hear their own voices often talk in a flat monotone, which is not only unpleasant to the ear but is also sometimes almost unintelligible. It is found that a deaf man who can see his own speech is soon able to add emotional colour to it and modulate his voice so that it sounds alive and natural.

It is also hoped that visible speech will be a great help in educating children who are born deaf. In his first year at school a deaf child usually learns only six words, and even in his third year only fifty, whereas in his third year a normal child learns about 3000 words. Visible speech will no doubt help to narrow down this enormous gap. It is thought highly probable that in the days to come even totally deaf people will be fitted into normal occupations, for example as telephonists. It is even possible that sound-patterns will convey to them many of the emotions which are normally conveyed through the ear.

WHILE we naturally think first of the deaf, visible speech is one of those basic discoveries which go far beyond any limited

application. Speech-trainers are already using the technique for studying defects in speech—stuttering, cleft palate, and so forth. Unless he has great experience, a trainer finds it hard to diagnose faults in speaking, or to prescribe remedies, because faults in speaking depend upon so many subtle factors. But a sound-pattern of his patient's voice will serve him in much the same way that moving-picture X-rays of tissue movements serve a doctor. Actors, orators, clergymen, and others could use visible speech to analyse and correct their own faults in elocution, and recorded pronunciations of foreign languages are an unusually effective way of teaching students without a teacher.

The Bell Telephone Laboratories have recorded an interesting series of visible speech patterns of languages ranging from Icelandic to Ojibway, and the curious fact emerges that the characteristic patterns of even English and Chinese are not so very different. This supports the idea that we have at last an international alphabet.

Of course, patterns can be made of sounds other than those of human speech. Noise nuisance and its psychological effects can be studied. Also visual patterns of music can be made. Fine points of tone, and the slurs which connect the various notes in singing show up clearly in the hieroglyphics, and so an instructor can point out to a pupil what he should do to improve his performance. Incidentally, the new technique will come as a welcome relief to the music critic who is hard put to it to vary his phraseology. In the future he will be able to discourse learnedly about the chiaroscuro of a singer's sound-patterns—which perhaps will figure on the posters outside the concert-hall to whet the appetite of music-lovers.

Something of the same kind has already been done in the case of birds. It is believed that bird books and periodicals in the future will be illustrated with song-pictures, which serious readers will learn to translate just as a musician reads a score. So far, little attention has been given to animal sounds, which have characteristics very different from those of the human voice. Scientists believe that comparisons between human sounds and those made by the anthropoid apes may throw new light on the story of evolution.

Even more interesting may be the 'songs' of the insects, including those which are inaudible to the human ear. Even a mos-

quito's hum, shown visually, has been found full of surprises.

It is well known, of course, that if we had ears a thousand times more acute than those of a fox, and ears, moreover, sensitive to sounds above and below the band of audibility, we should live in a different world. This world can now be studied, and perhaps even enjoyed, by the new sound-patterns. It is also possible to 'hear' what is happening in our own bodies. The Bell Telephone Laboratories have made an entirely different type of heart-beat spectogram, in which the muscular action of the heart is translated into sound-pictures. In this way the action of an abnormally-beating heart can be studied in

detail. Other organs can be studied in the same way. Here we have a completely new method of diagnosis.

The technicians who are responsible for the invention say modestly that visible speech is about at the same stage of development as was aviation in the days of the Wright brothers. Its possibilities for the future are immense. To take only two: voice-operated typewriters which will write automatically in visible speech are prophesied, and the patterns which they write will be able to 'talk back'; and our alphabet may give way to one of sound-patterns, while a written language in visible speech may enormously simplify the difficulties of international communication.

Riding Extra

G. RIDSDILL SMITH

'RIDING extra' is a phrase familiar enough to many parents and is to be found in that part of the school prospectus not intended to be taken too seriously, along with the arts and hobbies that last a man a lifetime. If any school were to put cricket or football with the extras, there wouldn't half be a row. Yet riding, manly, strenuous, and the perfect complement to team games in individual character-training, goes there without a murmur.

Now, I learnt to ride at a preparatory school whose headmaster, himself a county footballer and superb athlete, thought it was a good thing. It certainly was for me, for if I hadn't learnt there I don't suppose I should ever have had another chance. One of the headmaster's Quixotic ideas was to send us, mounted and dressed in Scout uniform and bearing bamboo lances with red and white pennons, to escort visitors from station to school. As to who was in the greater peril, escort or escorted, mothers watching anxiously

from the wagonette were occasionally in doubt.

We learnt the old style from a groom who rode 'long,' with the ball of his foot on the iron, and shouted 'Sit back, sir!' at any and every kind of jump, an injunction I carried out so literally once that I slipped over the horse's tail and woke up half-an-hour later in bed.

The next time I jumped was twenty years later—years occupied with public-school, war, and university—when I decided I must master this frightening manoeuvre. This time it was in a secluded field on the outskirts of Cambridge. My instructor on those dewy autumn mornings, when the hedgerows sparkled with hips and haws and the white towers of sleeping Cambridge glimmered through the mist, was a patient man and seemed in no hurry for his breakfast. He taught me at last so to jump that, on landing, my head did not strike the horse on crest or croup—and he taught me one masterful expression: 'Kick 'im in the

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guts!' which I subsequently was obliged to unlearn.

Then one day someone remarked, in a surprised way, 'What, never hunted?'—one of those casual shots that find a mark. So I bought an old hunter, very knowing, very bold, and started to learn from him. He was a big black, whose one idea was to be in the first flight with hounds in view. But he never played the fool—hunting was too serious a matter for that—though his enthusiasm often gave me more publicity than I desired. He taught me a lot besides hunting, as any horse can teach anyone who wants to learn—why otherwise should the Heroes have gone to Chiron the Centaur to learn how to live—but I have no intention of making a moral tale out of the memory of my old friend.

At the public-school where I taught between the wars there were about a dozen boys who rode, two or three masters, and some children. I was the official Riding Master, a very low-grade spare-time appointment. Sometimes I took my pupils by car to the stables; sometimes the horses came up to the school. Rides near the school were confined to the grass Roman Road through the woods, lovely at all times of year, but very deep in winter and the surest shoe-remover I know. Rides from the stables were much more varied. We would cross the railway and river—Izaak Walton's—inhalng malty aromas from the brewery, and walk uphill past the 17th-century almshouses for 'six poor women of religious conversation' to an old oak at the top, Cat's Oak, said to have been a rendezvous in the Peasants' Revolt, and now a charred stump from some picnickers' attentions, and canter down the meadows where the Rye House malcontents plotted to ambush Charles's coach; or ride by Cock Robin Lane to Hunsdon Church, where the Keeper, on a wall brass, for ever with bow and arrow hunts his stag and is hunted by Death; or past Blakesware, beloved by Charles Lamb, and by that insurance company which uses its burnt-out shell as an advertisement, with a gallop back over the grass high above the silver winding Ash and the daffodil slopes of Easeneye.

One field on this ride is for ever linked in my mind with the name of a boy, very precious in the eyes of his wealthy parents, who was bucked off there. He fell, soft, in the clover

and lost his spectacles. We searched in vain. I telephoned his housemaster that night to report the accident and the loss. 'Blankson in clover!' he gasped, amid spasms of laughter. 'It's too good to be true!'

In an afternoon we could reach the hamlet of Cold Christmas and follow the pebbly Rib to the purple willows by ruined Thundridge Church, with its ivy-choked tower and nettle-choked graveyard, where cherubim on the leaning headstones still puff their cheeks in celestial song; or ford the stream and go up past the tumuli—though that way is now debateable ground since the Parish Council made its recent survey—to Barwick, where, nestling in the wood, was a Christmas-cracker factory. Many a frosty evening I hacked home from a hunt this last way and let black Nick drink at the ford and watched the water, fiery in sunset light, ripple round his legs. On Ascension Day, a whole holiday, I sometimes took boys out all day and circled Much Hadham, where Catherine of France, widowed Queen of England and newly wedded to Owen Tudor, lived beside the church under the hanging bluebell woods. It was her lips, that spoke 'broken music' to Harry Plantagenet, which Pepys, who may well have ridden this way himself, kissed in Westminster Abbey more than two hundred years later. From an army dump near this historic village my unit drew its rations in 1940, and I can still see, in memory, the telephone orderly's indelible-pencil scrawl on the wall—'R.A.S.C. Mutch Adam.'

By devious means I contrived to hunt once a week. Meets were a long way off, sometimes fifteen miles or more, and I had to go into chapel and school, like the old hunting parsons, booted and breeched under academic dress, and bolt for stables as soon as the bell rang. To nearer meets I occasionally took boys out on hirelings, whose names—Red Knight, White Knight, and The Admiral—may stir memories in some who read this.

One year, rather rashly, I decided to enter for the Lightweight Race in our point-to-point, thinking Nick, with his racing record—a first and a second in one day in a Yorkshire point-to-point—would pull me through. Instead, he ditched me—my fault—and I crawled out to see a policeman hanging on to his head, trying to persuade him to come along quietly and not make such a neighing nuisance of

himself, for every neigh—and yea—would be taken down in evidence against him. But Nick didn't like the law, never had since the day when another constable took our names and address for riding on the footpath. It was the first time I had heard evidence given in court, and I blushed at the constable's distorted tale, and at that of his washerwoman witness, wherein we figured as a second Dick Turpin and Black Bess. Next time I saw the constable he was guarding the cups and books at our prize-giving and, I hope, drawing some consolation for the failure of his prosecution from those platform platitudes addressed to the non-prizewinners.

I had a few jumps put up at the school in a quiet corner by the wood, where fragments of Samian ware were dug up when digging for victory during the War, and here we struggled with that Alice-in-Wonderland trio—Red Knight, White Knight, and The Admiral. In the end, I usually had to put the boys up on Nick. Once a boy filmed us jumping—the Art Master, whose feet all but touched the ground, showing how not to do it; myself showing how to do it. When the film was developed some doubt arose, and still exists, as to which was which, the main difference between us being that he fell off and I did not. The film is still extant, and I sometimes unroll a few feet of it just to see again Nick's canter up to the jump, ears cocked and swishing tail, and the twinkle of his white socks in the sunlight as he sailed over.

To obtain better and more individual instruction we went once a fortnight to a well-known riding-school near by. Here, either out in the field with its whitewashed jumps or in the large covered school, our faults were anatomised—as were those of superior mortals, for we went there one afternoon, opened the double-doors of the school as usual, when a

voice roared 'Shut those doors!', which we did with alacrity, and just in time to stop a grey cob from escaping at high speed with its grim-jawed rider. The rider was Jack Hulbert, practising for *The Camels are Coming*.

This was the stable of stables, spotless, winking with brass and steel and dazzling with whitewash—a regular 'Horseback Hall.' Very different were my own stables by the village pub, shared by two other masters' horses and two Welsh ponies ridden most days of the week by their owner and a countless number of his friends, to whom were attributed all local misdemeanours—broken fences, open gates, and dropped calves. When they went, the village riff-raff had to find some other scapegoat. The other horses went in time, and last of all Nick, at the age of twenty-three, and the stables were left silent and chill. Then came the War.

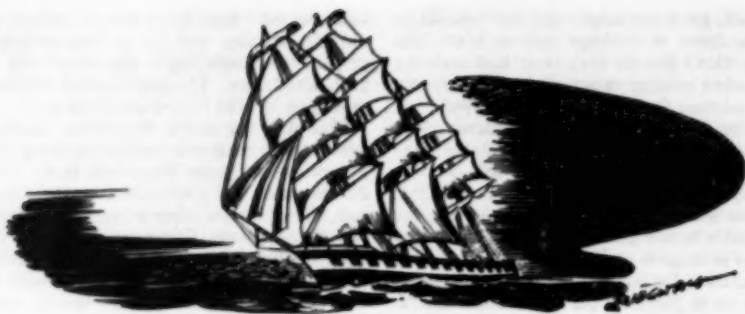
I returned in 1945 to find my jumps turned into a cabbage-patch and the stables perverted to garages. But the same proportion of boys—about 2 per cent of the school—started to ride again. What can one expect nowadays? It is, as one father said, an expensive luxury. Expensive, yes, though it need not be if schools subsidised riding as they do other games and kept their own horses. But a luxury, no—unless it is luxurious for a boy to prefer a saddle to the seat of a car or in a cinema, and to learn, by controlling a horse, how to control himself, to say nothing of exploring the countryside more widely than he ever will on foot or cycle. Kipling, who generally went to the heart of the matter, said: 'A boy is safe from all things that really harm when he is astride a pony.' What most boys want now is to bestride a motor-bicycle. We should be doing the world a service if we gave them a chance of learning some horse-sense first.

The Apron

*The cottage wore an apron,
A yellow field of wheat,
And all the fowls of heaven
Came flocking there to eat,
As if the cottage called them,
A hen-wife to her door,
And scattered from her apron
Their corn upon the floor.*

*And now the harvest yellow
Is turned to autumn brown,
But still it holds abundance,
And still the birds come down,
And still the little cottage
Looks on as if indeed
She really were a hen-wife
With hungry fowls to feed.*

ELIZABETH FLEMING.



First Day Aboard

Captain FRANK H. SHAW

ALTHOUGH she was a Scots-owned ship, the *Ravenby's* port of lading was Antwerp. That was where a romantic first-voyager joined the big barque. I confess to bleak disappointment—indeed, to shattering disillusionment. This was not the life I'd elected to live, after a boyhood course of Marryat, Gordon Stables, and Clark Russell. Where was the shining quarter-deck, with its natty midshipmen, bracing their slacks and shouting: 'Ay, ay, sir'? Where was the glimmering brass and polished teak, the decks scrubbed white as a hound's tooth? Certainly the *Ravenby* didn't provide such eye-gladdening sights.

True, I was lonely—an ex-schoolboy in foreign parts, with never a friendly smile to welcome me, or an honest handgrip to reassure. My father had made the occasion an excuse for a short Continental tour, with my mother and sister. He had escorted me down aboard on first arrival, and there had been told by a curiously unsympathetic captain that I wasn't needed for another week. Consequently I had been permitted to complete the tour, and an enjoyable experience enough it was. Never had human boy more sympathetic and affectionate relatives than I. My home was a model of comfort and modest luxury, where few unkindly words were ever spoken. It had

been, without doubt, a very sheltered life I'd lived for those first sixteen years. But the need to hurry through to Hook of Holland and the Harwich packet-boat compelled my kin to drop me off at Antwerp station, with appropriate farewells, and five golden sovereigns by way of palliative; and thus I boarded the *Ravenby* quite alone.

She was in a shocking condition—befouled with harbour grime, her graceful spars cock-billed every way by indifferent stevedores. Her main-deck was high-piled with loose coke, the spillage from the ten-ton waggons which had been tilted over her wide hatchways. Galley refuse, strong-smelling as a sewer, littered the scuppers abreast the fore'd-house. The half-deck—the steel deck-house allotted to the premium-paying apprentices—was crammed to the skylight with ship stores and debris of this kind and that. There was no room for the monumental sea-chest and kitbag a forlorn porter had trundled on a handcart from the railway-station. It was only the gratifying chink of those five golden sovereigns in my pocket that saved my heart from breaking. I'd hardly imagined there was so much money in the world!

I gave the dissatisfied porter such small change as I had—not much, since my father had been paymaster during the tour—and

looked at the alimy water overside. I don't think I meditated suicide, but in a way it seemed a better alternative than life aboard this bleak, disconsolate *Ravenby*. I sat on my sea-chest at the half-deck door and waited for something to happen. I'd made a tentative approach to the cabin under the poop, but there'd been no response to my knocking.

I contented myself with staring aloft at the sparring—at the tracery of rigging, up which I should valiantly climb to perform deeds of unimaginable heroism, at a Japanese steamer whose clattering winches were heaving a general cargo aboard at express speed, at the scummed water again. Still nothing happened. Where were the gay mischief-making middies who were going to share my sea-life? Where was the gunroom steward who would supply me with food and all else my heart desired? A thin mizzling rain didn't improve the outlook. I calculated that my previous five pounds would pay my fare back home, but—I'd cut such a dash in my home-town as a sucking Nelson, airing my natty brass-bound uniform with the manner of a future Commander-in-Chief Royal Navy, and bragging about potential adventures in all the seven seas, that common vanity forbade such a course. Moreover, I was hungry, as a boy could be hungry at sixteen. Then a sardonic, walrus-moustached nondescript in dirty shirt-sleeves and a battered bowler hove in sight from for'ard. He carried a wash-deck bucket of steaming water.

'Look here, you,' I said, 'I'm a newly joined cadet, and there isn't anybody to report to.'

'Likely I'll do,' he grunted, disliking me from that moment. 'I'm the first mate.'

Phew! Even ignorant I knew that a first mate was a person of incredible importance. So I stood up, and but for the small matter of my new manhood—having been entrusted with five golden pounds!—I think I should have wept. 'What do I do?' I asked.

'I'm generally called "sir" by you damned brassbounders,' said Mr Perkins. 'Do? Get this half-deck cleaned up for a start. Where the hell do you think you're going to live, if you don't?' Cleaning out my rabbit-hutches had been my most serious ploy prior to this date. 'Put all this dunnage in the lazarette. The cook'll give you a bucket of water and a broom. Look alive if you want anywhere to sleep. And when you've settled in, see that heap of sacks on the quay there?'

It was tarpaulin-covered; but sacks were visible. I acknowledged that, adding the expected 'sir.'

'Carry them aboard and dump them into the bread-tanks down the lazarette,' ordered Mr Perkins.

'If you please, sir, I'm hungry,' moaned I.

'You'll be a damn' sight hungrier aboard this starvation packet!' he barked, and his expression was as malicious as Lucifer's. 'Ask the cook if he has any grub to spare. You weren't expected until to-morrow, when the rest of the boys join ship.'

I never joined up ahead of time after that, be quite sure! Indeed, I made a strong point of being last aboard after that momentous day!

THE cook found me two hard pantiles and a slab of greasy salt-beef that stank to high heaven. He was a Barbadian negro, and patronising to a poor, ignorant scrap of white trash. But he did tell me of a waterfront café where I could get a really slap-up feed for two francs, with plenty of saucy girls to supply entertainment. This latter fact made no appeal. I'd always run a mile at home rather than meet a girl of my acquaintance face to face. But the idea of food sounded good.

I asked the 'Doctor' how I was to set about doing what the mate had ordered. 'Fust t'ing, change dem swagger duds fer dungaree,' he advised. I already felt so grateful that it was a wonder I didn't donate him one of my sovereigns, rather as Peter Simple would have patronised a bumboatman. 'Hi, you white chile,' he added, 'you use my cabin, s'pose you like. De black don't come off.' So I changed into split-new dungaree, reeking with dye, which, the rain increasing, was soon washed into the many scratches I got in this unusual work, causing poignant sores. I was, I confess, the most ignorant boy who ever went to sea. No one had even hinted at the reality; I had got all my impressions from glowing fiction.

The Barbadian lent a hand with clearing the half-deck. My assistance didn't amount to much. He spread my mattress in a swept-out bunk and folded my blankets—no more cool, spotless sheets! The mate must have been watching like a hawk. The moment the twelve-foot-square steel box was clear, he said: 'Go ahead with those bread-sacks!'

I went ahead. I carried Heaven knows

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how many tons of nubby bags across the quay, up the gangway, down aft to the lazarette, cut the sewing, decanted them into the steel bread-tanks. I hadn't sense enough to protect my neck and nape or my shoulders. I was rubbed red-raw by the coarse sacking. I ached in every muscle. At seven o'clock the mate, dressed for shore-going, said: 'You can knock off now. Turn-to at six in the morning, sharp! You'll be lucky if you get coffee.'

I was unlucky that evening in the fact that the cook had long ago locked up his galley and gone ashore to some black-welcoming Paradise of his own choice. True, the pockets of my dirty dungarees were stuffed with chunks of those flint-hard biscuits. They were peculiarly unpalatable, with nothing but stinking water to wash them down. But I was hungry. For a while I roamed the totally deserted *Ravenby*, hoping vaguely that some miracle would happen. Nothing did happen. I felt the ship was haunted by the spirits of disillusioned cadets, who'd been driven to self-destruction by lack of a welcome to a noble and inspiring career. Gosh, how sore I was; how grimy, too! But a mysterious being, who told me he was the night-watchman, appeared; and he took pity on forlorn me. He discovered a tank of water. I had soap and towels. 'Give yourself a wash and brush-up,' he advised. 'You'll feel better that way.' I made a rough toilet, using my sea-chest as washstand. There was no lamp in the half-deck, no warmth. Believe me, I was bewildered and scared of this crushing future I'd chosen for myself. This was what going to sea meant!

LET'S be frank—the *Ravenby* was a seagoing workhouse, a starvation packet of shocking reputation, more's the pity. Mr Perkins, the chief mate, was a disgruntled, frustrated tyrant, a fore-castle man, who hated those who had started life under better auspices than he himself had. His main design was to humiliate all those who began with a social standing superior to his own. He consistently handed out the 'sailorising jobs'—the craftsman work—to fore-castle hands, and set the premium-paying cadets to the dirty jobs of holystoning, paint-washing, cable-chipping, and the like. He was a sadist of disgusting tendencies. And, so eager had I been to go to sea in my young enthusiasm, that I had refused to wait

for a promised vacancy aboard a swagger Calcutta clipper!

My own silly fault? Maybe. Say, rather, my own colossal ignorance. What was an inland-bred youngster to know of ships and the sea? My kind father's ignorance equalled my own; but I'd posed as knowing all about everything, in youth's arrogant way, and he'd taken my say-so for gospel. I think the owners of the *Ravenby* were grossly at fault, considering the size of the premium they demanded for the privilege of doing four years' unpaid slavery, for that is virtually what it amounted to. It was not until after my indignant father had interviewed these owners—better left nameless—and threatened a public exposure, that the conditions aboard improved; and even then the captains undoubtedly had their instructions to increase the hellishness of ship-life so far as I myself was concerned. But these shipowners were God-fearing elders of their respective churches, highly respected in Glasgow, and, presumably, model fathers of large and happy families.

BUT my first day aboard was drawing to a close. I didn't know what to do, frankly. From ashore came sounds of music. The waterfront cafés, all more or less disreputable, were aglow with light and invitation. The Japanese boat was working late; the rattle and roar of her winches seemed to shake the arc-lit firmament. And I was hungry, hungrier than ever, after many hours strenuous toil.

I took my courage into both hands, and a sovereign from the till of my sea-chest, where I'd stowed the gold on changing to working rig. I donned my brassbound uniform, complete with saucy badged cap, and I went ashore into the Unknown. What the temptations and sinister threats of waterside Antwerp in the early 'Nineties might be I did not care, didn't even understand, for mine was a well-conducted, genuinely Christian home, into which sin and sorrow did not intrude. My father was shy. Never a hint of possible moral pitfalls had been conveyed to me, although, the Sunday before I left home, the parson had preached a special sermon and offered prayers on my behalf, praying I might be guarded from the perils of the sea and the greater perils of the land. Innocence was my middle name. Drink of any alcoholic sort was tabu in my home establishment. Make no mistake, I was even more callow than

Moses in *The Vicar of Wakefield*. If ever a chicken ready to be plucked was loose in Antwerp that drizzling night, I was that fowl. So I crossed the railway-tracks, dodging the swooping '8 chevaux 40 hommes' box-cars by a succession of miracles, and so to the noisy whirl of Belgium's raucous night-life. My stomach was ringing a serial dinner-bell. No other sense but hunger was aroused.

I looked into this café and that. Most were filled with uproarious sailors ashore, of every nationality under the sun—Lascars, Japanese, Squareheads, Britishers. Flimsily-dressed dancing-girls pirouetted around the tiled floors. Nickelodeons brayed 'The Ship I Love' and 'Sweetheart May.' That dates the story. The tunes were current when I first went to sea. 1895 it was.

I was scared to enter any one of these boisterous resorts. In some, wild fights were raging. A Lascar was pitched on to the pavement like a disused sack. My Barbadian cook was huddled on the kerb, completely intoxicated, but protesting: 'Ah, Barbados, dat's a happy place!' In between whiles he implored the steward to help him to his ship. But the steward, a mulatto, wasn't forthcoming. He was heavily involved with a tawdry blonde Norwegian dancing-girl, who got a commission on the drinks she tempted her patrons to buy. All this, I thought, was the gay and glittering world I'd craved to see with my own untutored eyes. Here was life, here was colour and the rich adventure of the story-books. Then succulent odours drew me like a magnet to a quieter establishment, where was no nickelodeon, no roistering shellbacks. Timidly, I entered, trying to remember my school French, which wasn't fluent. A neat Flemish waitress grinned. 'You hoongry, English boy?' she crooned. 'What you like? Fishanchips? Ros-bif? Chicken? We got everyt'ing.'

A CLEAR-CUT English voice from an inner corner hailed: '*Ravenby* ahoy!' I thought it a voice from heaven, a miraculous voice. How could anyone know I came from the good ship *Ravenby*? A badge-capped young man was eating heartily at a marble-topped table. 'Come and join me,' he invited. 'This steak is as tender as chicken.' He had a modest bock at his elbow. It was topped with froth and looked inviting. The remnants of his T-bone steak looked even more so.

'How do you know I'm from the *Ravenby*?' I asked, diffidently taking a seat.

'You're wearing her house-flag in your cap, like me,' he laughed. In 1895 there was no Merchant Navy badge to indicate a common service under the Red Duster. Each shipping company flew a characteristic house-flag, which was embroidered to form the cap-badge of such as were entitled to serve aboard their ships.

'Are you a *Ravenby*, too?' I asked, all the frozen loneliness thawing as if by magic.

'I am that, of course. First-voyager, aren't you?' I admitted the obvious.

'Feeling a bit strange, I'll bet. I'm senior apprentice. Chamberlain is my name. Yours?'

I told him. I even ventured to say that, had he been on board when I joined, the *Ravenby* wouldn't have seemed such a concrete desolation.

'Catch me joining ship a minute before it's necessary!' he laughed. 'I've got a stevedore bribed to tell me when she's going to sign on the crew. Then'll be time enough to make my number. Hi, Marie-Louise, look after this gentleman if you value your life.' He slapped her breech heartily. She giggled. She also brought the twin to his T-bone steak, with lavish chips and rolls of toothsome bread. But I holily refused the proffered bock. Seven generations of rabid teetotalers were shouting warning in my ears.

'Perhaps you're wise,' said Chamberlain. 'Once you've started, it isn't all that easy to leave off.' And then he began to talk, to put me wise out of his sagacious experience, and his words were so many priceless jewels. The *Ravenby's* captain, he admitted, was a three-way discharge son of a gun—a low-caste Irishman to whom no ideals were sacred. As for Perkins, the mate, Chamberlain found words that staggered me to describe his multifarious iniquities. But, he admitted, the rest of the half-deck crowd, when they turned up, would prove not such a bad lot—decent shipmates, was his phrase. I mentally sat at the feet of this oracle, absorbing information at every pore; and it was good, sound advice. I timidly asked him to drink another bock at my expense.

'Don't waste your pocket-money; I've still got some left,' he counselled.

'I've got five pounds!' I boasted, thinking myself a Cressus.

'Well, then,' he suggested, 'how about

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buying a lamp for the half-deck?' He admitted he was down to his last pound; but he had paid in advance for a cubicle at the Sailors' Home, and so was assured a head-cover until the eve of sailing-day. I begged him—son of a generous father, as I was—to accept the loan of a pound; but he refused.

'You save it,' he enjoined. 'You'll need all you've got to complete your outfit. Who fitted you out?'

I mentioned the name of a firm that regularly advertised in a London daily, offering to find good comfortable berths in first-class ships, under kind, Christian captains, who took a delight in instructing the young cadets in seamanship and navigation, for such as used their services as outfitters—and sailors' robbers they were, if ever!

'Oh, those swindling dastards!' cried Chamberlain. 'Then I'll bet a payday you'll need half as much again as they've supplied you with.'

And he told me what a sea-life was really like, as he'd proved after three world-round voyages. 'It isn't too late yet,' he said. 'If I were you I'd catch the first packet home and tell your pater you'd made a mistake and were ready to swallow the anchor.' He lit a rank pipe and puffed satisfiedly. 'Or else find a bathroom, where you won't make a mess, and cut your lily-white throat,' he advised.

I laughed at that, reassured by his competent geniality. I admitted to strangeness and loneliness; though, under the warmth of his generous companionship, the loneliness was passing.

'I suppose you might do worse,' said he. 'Maybe my three voyages are the worst of it. There's always a hope of improvement. And you'd be ashamed to face your shore pals, same as I was, and admit you couldn't stick it out. That's only moral cowardice. Take my tip and clear out.' But, of course, I didn't.

'Well, what do we do now?' asked the senior apprentice. 'Run the rag down?' I didn't know what he meant. My ignorance must have shown. He laughed again. He said: 'Don't mess about with women any sooner than you need. They're the devil. Especially here, in Antwerp—filthy shop it is.' What he told me—sagacious advice it was, I remember—flowed over me like water running off a duck's back. I might have fallen into much worse hands. Chamberlain didn't make women sound at all appealing—

the sort of women lonely sailors are apt to meet.

'Let's go to the circus,' he recommended after his harangue, and after apologising for what he called 'a proper pi-jaw.' 'We can't come to much harm there.' So we went to the circus, and very amusing it was. The streets were full of chattering people when we emerged. We had another meal, of coffee and sticky pastry. Jolly good it was.

'I'll see you aboard,' Chamberlain said. 'We can dodge old Perkins if we watch our step, I expect.' But he sent me on ahead when we fetched up alongside the *Ravenby*, until I gave him the all clear. We'd bought a kerosene lamp at a store which kept open late—few Antwerp shops closed before midnight—and I, under Chamberlain's instructions, cadged oil from the watchman. Lamp-lit, the half-deck looked terrible.

'We'll get it treacled up, never you fear,' said my guide and counsellor. 'Bunk-curtains will make a difference; pin up your photographs in your bunk.' Then he seemed diffident. He hummed and hawed a bit. He blurted out: 'No need to fret about me if you want to say your prayers!' In many of the sea-stories I'd devoured, the hero was the target for sea-boots as he ventured to kneel at his bunkside. I'd wondered a lot about that feature of my personal sea-life. 'We'll do it now, together, if you like,' Chamberlain said simply.

We did. Then the bull-like bellow of Mr Perkins hailing the watchman disturbed the calm that had strangely descended on that miserable living-place.

'Here's where I do a bunk,' said Chamberlain, and slid under the lower sleeping-berths.

Just in time. The mate tugged open the door without warning, peered in. He was drunk. 'Don't go wasting the owners' oil, young shaver!' he gulped. 'See you are ready to turn to at four bells to-morrow morning.' He slammed the door and shuffled away.

Under his breath Chamberlain sang: 'It's time for us to leave her!' Then, emerging, he said: 'It'll get better as you get more used to it, young 'un. I'm off to the Sailors' Home. Good-night.' He slipped away, leaving me alone in that cheerless loneliness. And yet, it wasn't loneliness any more. I'd found a friend. All my romantic dreams rushed back in a wave. It was going to be all right. And, thanks to an abiding friendship, it was.



Twilight Over Gaeldom

NEIL MATHESON

LOSS of power and distinction is a sad spectacle, but the greatest and saddest tragedy is when the treasured language dies slowly out; when winter falls upon the legendary remembrance of a people.' Fiona Macleod—William Sharp, that is to say—wrote these words many years ago, and, of course, he was referring to the Gaelic. Much later, in 1932, the late Professor W. J. Watson of the Chair of Celtic in Edinburgh University penned words of similar import. 'It is sad to reflect,' he wrote, 'that if the number of Gaelic speakers throughout Scotland is to decline as it has done during the past ten years Gaelic as a spoken language will be extinct in less than seventy years.'

A Gaelic-speaking friend with whom I was discussing the possibility was quite indignant. 'The Gaelic language will be spoken a thousand years after this,' he told me. But people talked like that about the old Norn language, which faded out in Shetland some two hundred years ago, as they did about Cornish, which died out in Cornwall about the same time.

The recent Census figures underline Professor Watson's warning in no uncertain manner, for, while the total population of Scotland is now fully a quarter of a million greater than at the previous Census in 1931,

the number of Gaelic speakers has fallen from 136,135 to 94,282 during the same period. There is little excuse for complacency in these figures. In 1801, one Scotsman in five spoke Gaelic; in 1860, the ratio was one in ten; to-day, it is rather less than one in fifty. When An Comunn Gaidhealach was founded in 1891—and its first object was 'the teaching and use of the Gaelic language'—there were no fewer than 254,415 Gaelic speakers in Scotland.

Every year our great Mods are held, when Gaeldom abandons itself to a week of glorious music and the renewing of auld acquaintance. There is the thrill of the tartans, the joy of meeting old friends, 'the soft touch of the Gaelic accent that in the proper key and hour is the thing to break hearts,' as Neil Munro has it, and, of course, the old songs with the ache in them. Yes, the Mod is a unique gathering, colourful, impressive, electrifying. It is all that, and much more. But, and it is an important but, the Gaelic is dying.

THERE is fairly general agreement, if not complete unanimity, amongst Celtic scholars that Gaelic was introduced into Scotland from Ireland. At any rate that is the opinion of outstanding authorities like

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Whitley Stokes, Kuno Meyer, Zimmer, Mackinnon, and Watson. The event took place about the 2nd century A.D. when the first batch of Gaelic colonists landed in Argyll from northern Ireland.

A Celtic language was already spoken in Scotland, but it was Pictish—a form of Cymric—and not Gaelic. Ptolemy who completed his famous atlas about A.D. 130 gives a long list of place-names from the Pentland Firth southward, which indicate quite clearly that a Cymric type of language was in use all over Scotland in the 2nd century. We know that this language was spoken in the north of Scotland as early as the 4th century A.C. when Pytheas made his famous voyage to the islands of the far north. There is not a single Ptolemaic place-name in Scotland with a distinctive Gaelic form.

Gradually, however, Gaelic began to supersede Pictish, although in the 6th century we hear of Columba, who spoke Gaelic, requiring the assistance of interpreters when he visited Lochaber and Skye, where Pictish was still the language. It was probably not until the 10th century that Pictish entirely disappeared. By the 11th century Gaelic had reached its zenith and was the speech of Scotland from the Tweed to the Pentland Firth, although Caithness and Lewis may then have been mainly Norse-speaking.

In the 7th century Gaelic had actually crossed the border into Northumberland, where we are told Aidan of Iona—the founder of the famous monastery of Lindisfarne—preached to the people in Gaelic, the king sitting at his feet interpreting. Alfrith the Wise, King of Northumbria, who is referred to in Irish records as Fland Fina mac Ossu, was a renowned Gaelic poet and scholar. He died in A.D. 705.

The Gaelic appears to have died out in Roxburghshire, Selkirkshire, and Berwickshire in the 12th century, and in Peeblesshire and the Lothians a century later. The evidence of place-names confirms that Gaelic was once spoken throughout the Borders. Near Dunbar, for example, there is a knoll called Knockenhair, which in Gaelic is Cnoc na h'Aire, the Watch Hill, most likely connected with the ancient dun, or fort, of Dunbar.

At Abbey St Bathans in Berwickshire there is an old ford on the river Whitadder called Shannabank, which Watson explains as Gaelic Sean-ath, old ford. The abbey itself has associations with Iona. The night before

he died Columba was busy transcribing the Psalter. He employed much of his time on work of this kind. When he got to verse 10 of Psalm xxxiv, 'They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing,' he stopped, saying: 'Let Baithen finish it.' And this is the same Baithen whose name is commemorated in Abbey St Bathans.

In Galloway the Gaelic persisted until well on in the 18th century, and in this connection it is interesting to read that about the year 1762 the parish of Barr in Carrick advertised for a schoolmaster, one of the essential qualifications being that 'he budst be able to speak Gaelic.' According to Burt, Gaelic was the prevailing tongue, even after the Union, as far south as Fife, and it continued to be spoken in the uplands of Angus until well on in the 19th century.

To-day, Gaelic is still spoken by a few of the older people in the uplands of Aberdeenshire and Banffshire, but generally speaking, apart from isolated pockets throughout the Highlands, the Gaelic-speaking communities are almost entirely confined to the islands and the districts along the west coast.

THERE are, of course, thousands of Gaelic speakers in Canada. Strangely enough, although Scotsmen have played a prominent part in the political life of the Dominion, the Gaelic language was not included in the linguistic section of the Canadian Census until 1931. At that time the number of Gaelic speakers in Canada was stated to be 32,000, of whom 29,000 were Canadian-born. By far the largest colonies were in Nova Scotia, where 24,000 of the inhabitants still make constant use of the Gaelic language.

Gaelic has now and again been heard in the Parliament of Nova Scotia, and on several occasions it has been employed in the Law Courts. Once when Judge James MacDonald, who was Chief Justice of the Province from 1881 to 1904, was holding court a case arose in which two neighbours, neither of whom understood English, were involved. Not a word of English passed during the case, the witnesses, lawyers, and judge all using Gaelic.

In Cape Breton Island, the north-east part of Nova Scotia, there was published from 1892 to 1904 *MacTalla*, the only all-Gaelic newspaper in the world, and from its issue of 3rd October 1902 we cull the following illuminat-

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ing extract. 'The Presbyterians have thirty-nine places of worship in the island and Gaelic is preached in all of these except six. At the time of writing they have thirty-five appointed ministers, twenty-nine of whom can preach in Gaelic. The Catholics have thirty-seven parishes, and all but six have Gaelic. There are forty-one priests at work, of whom thirty-one are Gaelic speakers.'

From the beginning of the settlements, the Gaels of Cape Breton Island determined that the tongue of their forefathers would not die, and so they made it the language of the home. And even to-day you will find children, separated by three or four generations from the old country, still lisping the Gaelic as their first language.

In 1939 there was opened in Cape Breton Island the Gaelic College of St Ann's, which provides courses in the Gaelic language, and in Gaelic literature, history, and music; and since 1944 instruction has also been given in the weaving of clan tartans and in other handicrafts. The people of the island have their annual Mods and Highland Games, and retain many of the old Highland ways of life, including even the waulkings. If the people of the Highlands of Scotland had the same passion for the old language it would not be in the parlous position it is in to-day.

You will find the Gaelic in strange places. Cunninghame Graham tells of a colony of Highlanders who emigrated to South America after the '45. Four generations later the descendants were 'gaucho to the hilt,' but they still retained a few words of their ancestral tongue. An old man, Don Alejandro by name, told Graham: 'My father spoke Gaelic, and those who spoke it were always versed in the traditions of our race.'

Even in our own generation some of the descendants of Highlanders who emigrated to Carolina, U.S.A., after the '45 still spoke Gaelic. Not only so, but their negro servants also spoke it. The Gael is far-travelled—in the U.S.A. there are said to be 250,000 people who bear the name of Campbell—but wherever you may find him the open sesame to his heart is the language of his fathers. According to Cunninghame Graham even the dogs like it. 'A collie dog, ye ken,' he tells us, 'would rather hear a West Highlandman swear at him in Gaelic than an English leddy ca' him a' the pets in the world. It's no his fault, it's no the swearin' that he likes, but just the tone of the voice. A gran' language the Gaelic;

profanity in it just sounds like poetry in any other tongue.'

BUT the Gaelic is dying. Even in Cape Breton Island there are signs of decay. As a writer recently put it: 'Gaelic may be the language of the home, of the fisherman, and of the farm, but Cape Breton is becoming a commercial and industrial centre. The language of industry and commerce is English, and unfortunately in our materialistic world it is the language of industry and commerce that seems fated to conquer.'

In our own country the Census figures tell their own story. It is not a happy story. Few of us, however, expected it to be quite so unhappy, because not only are thousands of people endeavouring to learn the language through the lessons broadcast by the B.B.C., but never were evening continuation classes in Gaelic so popular or greater facilities available for the teaching of Gaelic in day-schools. Four years ago, for example—and for the first time in history—Gaelic appeared in the curriculum of certain selected secondary schools in Glasgow as an alternative to other languages. Never did the portents look so propitious. Yet the Census figures show that something more—a lot more—is needed if the Gaelic is to be saved.

The late Sir Alexander MacEwen, a great enthusiast in the Gaelic cause, summed up the position in words which will bear repetition to-day:

'You cannot revive a language by literary or commercial arguments. You can only revive a language when you appeal to the deepest sentiments of a people, when you arouse at once their faith and their passions.'

'In trying to save Gaelic we are trying to save not a language but a civilisation.'

'For many generations now Highlanders have been brought up in the comfortable belief that they can preserve their character, customs, and traditions and yet allow their language to perish. It is a pitiful and impossible task.'

The decline in the number of Gaelic speakers is, of course, due in no small measure to depopulation. Many of the Western Isles carry less than a third of the population they had a hundred years ago, and all over the Highlands the same process has been going on for a century. To that extent it is an economic problem.

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THERE is, however, more to it than that, for in Ross and Cromarty—the county with the highest percentage of Gaelic speakers—almost 60 per cent of the population are to-day non-Gaelic-speaking. In Argyllshire the present percentage is as high as 80, and all over the Highlands the story is pretty much the same.

It obviously lies with the Gaelic-speaking parents of the Highlands to say whether the Gaelic is to be preserved, for if it dies in the home it will not survive anywhere else. And the inescapable inference is that many Gaelic-speaking parents are quite indifferent to the fate of the Gaelic. Many of them, indeed, appear to regard it as a hindrance to the success of their children in after life. Why, it is difficult to understand, because over and over again it has been proved that the bilingual pupil is superior in intelligence to the pupil speaking English only. Nevertheless, the prejudice exists, and its roots are not of yesterday.

The Registrar-General of 1871 was merely expressing sentiments that had been deliberately fostered in the Highlands since the 17th century when he wrote: 'The Gaelic language stands in the way of the success of the natives in life; it shuts them up from the paths open to their fellow-countrymen who speak the English tongue. We are one people and should have but one language.' More than two hundred years earlier a writer, referring to King James IV, said that 'he spoke the language of the savages who live in some parts of Scotland.'

In 1616 the Lords of the Privy Council issued an Act for the erection of schools in every parish in Scotland, stipulating, however, that English was to be the only language of instruction, so that Gaelic, 'one of the chieff and principall causes of the continuance of barbaritie and incivillitie among the inhabitants of the Isles and Hylandis, may be abolisht and removit.'

In 1646 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland passed a resolution demanding the implementation of the Statute of Iona, under which every gentleman in the Highlands who possessed more than sixty head of cattle should send his eldest son or daughter to the Lowlands to receive an English education.

In the early 18th century the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge began the erection of schools throughout the Highlands and Islands, and by the end of that

century they had established no fewer than 323. But to the Lowlanders who directed the affairs of the Society, Gaelic and Roman Catholicism were synonymous terms, and the same regulations that bound their schoolmasters to the 'Formula against Popery' bound them also to prohibit their scholars from speaking Gaelic—the only language most of them knew. 'Nothing can be more effectual,' they said, 'for reducing these countries (i.e. the Highlands and Islands) to order and making them usefull to the Commonwealth than teaching them their duty to God, their King and Countrey and rooting out their Irish language.'

STRANGELY enough, the first effective protest against this anti-Gaelic policy came from Dr Samuel Johnson, an English Episcopalian Tory. 'Of what they, the Highlanders, had before the late conquest of their country,' he wrote, 'there remains only their language and their poverty. Their language is attacked on every side. Schools are erected in which English only is taught and there were lately some who thought it reasonable to refuse them a version of Holy Scriptures.'

Although he said some rather uncomplimentary things about the Scots, Dr Johnson was a firm upholder of the Gaelic, not merely because it was part of the people's inheritance and a vehicle through which their emotions could be most effectively stirred, but also because, as he expressed it, 'languages are the pedigrees of nations.' He bitterly attacked the policy of those who aimed at obliterating all distinctions between Highlander and Lowlander, and whose objective appeared to be the assimilation of the language and customs of both in a mould altogether alien to Gaelic tradition. He even went so far as to declare that he could conceive no subject more worthy than Gaelic of treatment in Scottish universities; and if his advice had been followed St Andrews would have been the first of our Scottish universities to have a chair of Celtic.

Another factor militating against the preservation of the Gaelic is the fact that for two hundred years the bulk of the upper classes in the Highlands have been Gaelic neither in speech nor in sentiment. A Sassenach education does not fit in well with the Gaelic background. With his usual discernment Dr Johnson saw this, and gave it as his opinion

that it would be a good thing if Highland chiefs were not allowed to go farther south than Aberdeen, for, as he pointed out, 'a strong-minded man . . . may be improved by an English education but in general they will be tamed into insignificance.'

Not only was there prejudice against the Gaelic, but school children were punished—often brutally punished—for speaking their mother-tongue at school. 'When we came to Islay,' a young woman told Alexander Carmichael, author of *Carmina Gadelica*, 'I was sent to the parish school to obtain a proper grounding in arithmetic. I was charmed with the schoolgirls and their Gaelic songs. But the schoolmaster—an alien like myself—denounced Gaelic speech and Gaelic songs. On getting out of school one evening the girls resumed a song they had been singing the previous evening. I joined willingly, if timidly, my knowledge of Gaelic being small. The schoolmaster heard us, however, and called us back. He punished us till the blood trickled from our fingers, although we were big girls with the dawn of womanhood upon us. The thought of that scene thrills me with indignation.'

It was a scene that could be paralleled in almost any parish in the Highlands sixty or seventy years ago. How extraordinary to find an Inspector of Schools for Ross, Caithness, and Sutherland in 1878 expressing himself in these words: 'I should regard the teaching of Gaelic in schools in any shape or form as a most serious misfortune.'

THE Education Act of 1872 ignored Gaelic, but in 1874 a concession was made whereby an inspector might allow pupils to express themselves in Gaelic if they had difficulty in doing so in English!

The Celtic Chair in Edinburgh University was founded in 1882, and in 1905 Gaelic was first recognised as a subject for the Leaving Certificate, although the paper set was on the Lower Grade only: not until 1916 was a Higher Grade paper set. Under the Education Act of 1918 the teaching of Gaelic was made compulsory in Gaelic-speaking districts—the culmination of fifty years' agitation spear-headed by Inverness Gaelic Society and An Comunn Gaidhealach—and courses of instruction in Gaelic are now available at Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Aberdeen universities.

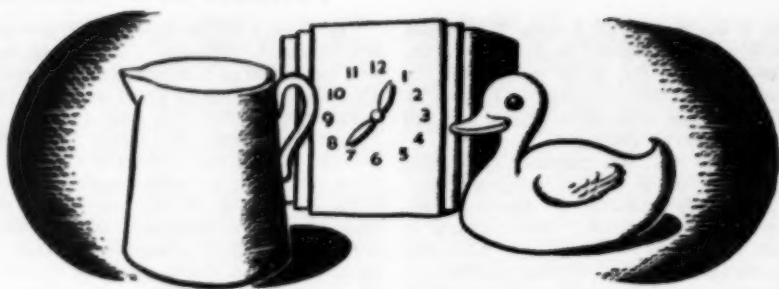
One of the most encouraging approaches to the subject is visualised in the reports on primary and secondary education issued by the Scottish Advisory Council on Education a few years ago. In their report on primary education the Council recommended 'that all Scottish children should learn something of Gaelic life and legends and traditions. Some pupils as they grow older may wish to learn the Gaelic language and read its literature, and, for these, opportunities at selected schools may one day be provided.' In the report on secondary education it was recommended that 'in large centres where there is a considerable population of Celtic origin facilities for learning Gaelic should be available in one school at least.'

One can at least say of these recommendations that they are signs of hope. The necessary facilities are now available, and if the people of the Highlands, and indeed of Scotland, resolve to utilise them to the utmost there can still be a great future for Scotland's old language. One thing is certain. If the Gaelic dies it will take with it the soul of a race which, having regard to its size, has made incomparable gifts to Britain, to the Commonwealth, and to the world at large.

Inseparable

*When I am sad, and know not why I weep,
When still returns the sternly-banished tear,
When mournful dreams pursue my restless sleep,
I sometimes wonder, with an anxious fear,
If you are downcast, and a loving I
Feel in my heart your still-unspoken grief.
Then let my sadness linger, if thereby
Your tears, your pain, your sorrowing be brief.*

MAY MCMURDO.



The Unknown Genius of Kirkintilloch

*Archibald Scott Couper—Pioneer in
Organic Chemistry*

F. G. KAY

A CENTURY ago a twenty-one-year-old man, handsome but delicate-looking, with dark eyes that were bold denials of his shy and diffident manner, returned for a holiday to his native Kirkintilloch from his studies in Berlin. In his brain were the rudiments of a theory which was to revolutionise science throughout the world and should have made the name of Archibald Scott Couper as famous as that of Michael Faraday, Louis Pasteur, or Albert Einstein. But one of the most pathetic tragedies of science was to decree otherwise. Not even the belated efforts of those who have since recognised Couper's contribution to knowledge have really altered the state of oblivion which surrounds his name.

Forty years after his death a small plaque was fixed above his birthplace in Kirkintilloch. The writer first saw it in company with an executive of an American plastics concern. He was a visitor to the Edinburgh Festival in 1950. He wanted to find the way to the little burgh outside Glasgow, and we went together.

He regarded this visit to Couper's birthplace as the most memorable event of his visit to Britain. Hundreds of foreign chemists would say the same. Kirkintilloch has become a place of pilgrimage—better known to people from overseas than to thousands of Couper's compatriots. It is, indeed, owing to the unstinted efforts of a German chemist that the shy young Scotsman's work has gone on record. Without years of investigation in several countries the whole triumph and its accompaniment of tragedy might never have been revealed.

TO-DAY most of the details of Couper's life are known, and the painstaking work which went into the compilation of those details can hardly be appreciated. Couper was born in 1831, the son of a local cotton-mill owner. He was a delicate child, and spent much of his time reading. Very soon he showed that there was a brilliant brain within that frail body, and his career at the Uni-

THE UNKNOWN GENIUS OF KIRKINTILLOCH

versities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, where he studied philosophy and the classics, was commendable, though the fact that the registers contain nothing special about him indicates that his achievements were not spectacular.

The Scottish universities were at that time, of course, well established as centres of advanced scientific research, and undoubtedly this atmosphere of the laboratory, plus the existence of problems of bleaching, dyeing, and so on, which he saw in his father's textile works, turned his attention to chemistry. Probably when he was twenty he took up the study seriously in Berlin and Paris. The only definite details since discovered about this period of his life were that in the summer of 1852, when he was twenty-one, he was studying in Berlin, his friend and fellow-student being a man named Berring. Most of the facts of this period of Couper's life were obtained from this man some fifty years later, his discovery coming about through a series of remarkable coincidences when Professor Alexander Crum Brown of Edinburgh helped in a world-wide search for details of Couper's early life.

After the end of the summer term Couper returned to Kirkintilloch and appears to have spent the winter there. By early 1853 he was back in Europe, busy on the work which was to make him a great pioneer of chemistry. For three years he remained in Berlin, and then transferred to Paris, at that time perhaps the best centre in the world for original research.

It should be realised that organic chemistry was then still blundering about in the darkness of ignorance. Dalton had propounded the atomic theory of the constitution of matter, but no one knew of what the atoms were made or how the atoms of different substances combined to make other substances. Man knew that Nature used a sort of standardised brick to build everything that existed, but the arrangement of those bricks, or even the types of bricks available to make those designs, was not known. Couper was the first man to unlock the door to this knowledge.

IN Paris the young Scots chemist worked under the guidance of Charles Wurtz, Professor of Chemistry at the Sorbonne, and one of the great organic chemists of his time. He was, at the date when Couper was his student, only forty-one years old, and should

have been young enough to appreciate revolutionary thought. That he did not was the first stage in the tragedy which followed.

Diffidently, the young chemist showed to a friend, Adolph Lieben, a paper he had written, prior to its publication in a scientific journal, *Comptes Rendus*. The article duly appeared, with the name 'Monsieur Couper' printed in small type, and duly gained some minor criticism. Then it was forgotten. But this paper was the first theory of molecular constitution. In it Couper suggested that every carbon atom had the power to link up with four other atoms, and that they also had the unusual capacity of linking together to form a chain. It was a sensational idea—and the right one. Organic chemistry found itself with the gates of future development flung wide open. From this theory of Couper's has emerged all the great chemical industries of to-day. Plastics, synthetic thread, dyestuffs, drugs, even nuclear fission, owe their birth to this article in a French journal from the pen of Monsieur Couper, the twenty-seven-year-old Scots student of the Sorbonne.

Despite criticism, Couper was determined that his theory should gain wider recognition. He amplified the details and asked his professor, Wurtz, to submit it to the French Academy. Accepted for reading and discussion before that august body, world-wide renown was certain. Wurtz was worried that in sponsoring such a far-fetched idea by a young and unknown student he might damage his own reputation. He pondered over it, asked the advice of colleagues, delayed submission for week after week. Couper was on tenterhooks. As he was not a member of the Academy, he was not able to submit the paper direct. As a foreigner in the French capital he had no other friend in a position to submit it for him.

Then came the terrible day when a German chemist, August Kekule, published findings virtually identical with those of Couper. As a matter of fact, Kekule's work was not so good; for one thing his method of representation of the constitution of compounds by symbols was not nearly so clear as that suggested by Couper, whose system is basically the one used to-day. But the fame was all Kekule's. Honours were showered on him. His country made him a Baron. The universities of Europe fought to persuade him to join their faculty. In the midst of all this excitement, a kindly French chemist and states-

man, Jean Dumas, arranged to have an abstract of Couper's article published by the French Academy. It caused little comment.

The disappointment began to turn Couper's brain. He berated Wurtz and was expelled from the laboratory. Weary and disillusioned he returned to Scotland and worked for a time in the laboratories of Edinburgh University under Dr, later Lord, Playfair. No one there seems to have realised the calibre of the nervous, rather sullen young man with a Continental training, for the records have no details of his work. Undoubtedly he was even then a mere shadow of himself, and he soon terminated his employment.

About this time his father died, and his own health became worse. In an endeavour to recuperate he took a holiday, and suffered an attack of sunstroke. It was the final blow. For a while he convalesced at Dunoon, but it was soon evident that his brain had gone. One of the few entries in any official record during Couper's life is that of the Scottish Board of Lunacy, which mentions his entry into an asylum as a private patient in May 1859. He stayed for two months and was then discharged. Getting worse, he was readmitted until November 1862, when, his madness proving static and quite harmless, he was discharged into the care of his mother. For some thirty years she was spared to care for him until his death at the age of sixty-one on 11th March 1892.

THERE must be many old folk living in Kirkintilloch to-day who recall in the days of their youth 'loony Couper' ambling quietly around the town, his remarkable eyes dulled with mental vacancy. He was not dangerously mad in any way, merely showing

the simplicity of a very young child, evincing interest only in bright colours or unusual noises. It is safe to say that not one of the villagers realised that once those childlike eyes had studied the very heart of matter, or that the sleeping brain probed into the innermost secrets of Nature. Until 1903 no one knew or remembered what Archibald Couper had achieved.

Then Richard Anschütz, a chemist at the University of Bonn, began writing a biography of Kekule. From the dusty archives of the scientific institutions of Paris and Berlin he read the journals contemporary with Kekule. He found that obscure article and could hardly believe his eyes when he noted the date. To the eternal credit of Anschütz, instead of simply ignoring a clue which was in fact damaging to the claim of the man whose life he was writing to be the pioneer of the molecular theory, he began the painstaking work of finding out who Couper was. In a copy of the *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal* of the same period he found an article by Archibald Couper on his researches into the constitution of salicylic acid. Could this Archibald Couper be the same as Monsieur Couper? It seemed possible, and it also gave a clue that he was connected with Edinburgh University.

At that time Couper had been dead for eleven years and had done no scientific work for at least forty-four. But by ceaseless inquiries among very old men, long since retired from the principal universities of Scotland and Europe, innumerable letters to registrars demanding that they search their records, piece by piece the story was put together. And so, in 1906, thanks to a German chemist-biographer, the pioneer work of Archibald Couper was shown to the world.

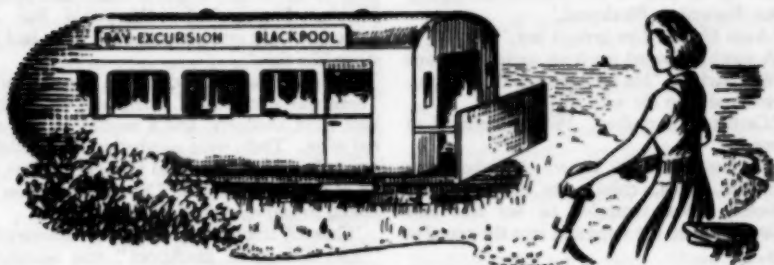
Meteor

*The old stars march across the blue,
Obedient, keeping pace with Time—
The muted measures of dim worlds
Matching the Universe's rhyme.*

*Knowing no law, no order, I
Play truant from a wiser creed,
And taste, in one ecstatic flight,
The rapture of forbidden speed.*

*The old stars keep their lawful ways,
Yet half a world shall hold its breath
At courage of my rebel life,
The flaming glory of my death.*

DORIS AMY IBBOTSON.



Day Excursion Blackpool

JEAN PAYTON

AUNT Ursula was my godmother. She was super-eccentric, but had a happy knack of skimming the cream off life. Up to the age of thirty nobody quite knows what she did, apart from her painting. She probably satisfied her hunger for travel and flung herself across continents. Money was never a difficulty.

At thirty she married Keiler. They were evenly matched intellectually, but, unfortunately, their respective intellects were not complementary. For nearly eighteen months the canvases and palettes went flying through the house. The servants extracted themselves one by one until none was left. For the last month of their living together I understand they existed on pickled onions, Camembert, and anything they could find in a tin. Then Keiler packed it up one day and retired to his club in town.

After that, Aunt Ursula enjoyed a perfect divorce to the end of her days. Keiler and Aunt Ursula always remained very fond of one another, but simply found it impossible to live together. For the next thirty-three years they met regularly every four months for lunch up in town. Keiler remarried, but this made no difference at all to the lunches. No atom of jealousy existed in this triangle.

THE last time I saw Aunt Ursula was one October when I was summoned to stay with her in her railway-coach on the South Coast. The address was sufficiently odd in itself to be worthy of Aunt Ursula:

Day Excursion Blackpool,
Rocky Point.

I made the journey in our old Ford. Rocky Point was a headland. It stretched before me as a dull, flat expanse perhaps as much as a mile across. It just stuck out into the sea without apparent rhyme or reason. There were no houses and the only bushes I could discern in the dusk were a half-hearted group towards the east side. They seemed to be sheltering some sort of hut, and I thought I could detect some chimney-smoke rising. It suddenly struck me that this was where Aunt Ursula lived!

The road petered out almost immediately, and it meant driving cross-country. The ground was parched and there was hardly any grass. After a few minutes I reached my destination. I jumped out of the car. The coach affair was plural. It consisted of two coaches arranged parallel to one another with a guard's-van fitted across one end to convert the whole into a square C-shape. The

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coaches were raised on brick piles. A board stuck up on one of the coaches announced 'Day Excursion Blackpool.'

'Aunt Ursula, I'm here at last.'

A voice answered me from underneath one of the coaches. 'No need to state the obvious. Come and help me with this wood.'

'Certainly,' I replied. 'Whereabouts shall I put it?'

'Oh Lord! I don't know. Anywhere you can find room, child,' she answered impatiently. She struggled to her feet and followed me up the steps and into the guard's-van.

By now it was getting dark. I couldn't see anything inside, but I managed to grope towards a corner where I dropped my load. Aunt Ursula was busying herself with a hurricane-lamp. She slammed the glass cage down and at last we had some light.

'How are you, Aunt Ursula?' I inquired.

'Oh, I'm in rude health,' she exclaimed. 'Haven't got time to be otherwise.'

What could she mean by that? Surely there could be nothing to do all day in such a place as this. She next lit three railway-lamps and presented me with one of them. 'That's for you,' she announced. 'You're travelling first-class.'

'Thank you very much.' I took the lamp. 'But what exactly does "first-class" mean?' I asked.

'The coaches are first-class and third-class respectively,' she explained. 'Yours is this side.' She led the way.

AS I set the lamp down, the coach filled with a soft light, so that I was able to get a full picture of it. I gave a little gasp when I saw how lovely it was. The wood was painted white and everything looked fresh and dainty, but without losing that high degree of interest which was always to be found under Aunt Ursula's roof.

'This is simply beautiful,' I declared, utterly delighted with the coach.

I knew she was pleased by my enthusiasm, but she tried to hide the fact and said: 'Well, hurry up and bring your things in. I'm going to fling some supper together.'

I had only brought a few belongings and managed to stuff them all on to the luggage-rack over the bed. I hung my towel over the communication-cord and then went back into the guard's-van. The stove was burning well.

It was becoming nice and cosy. 'You were jolly lucky to get a goods-train van, Aunt Ursula,' I remarked. 'If you'd had a passenger-train one you wouldn't have had a stove like this.'

My eyes wandered over the guard's-van. There was a cupboard where she obviously kept food, crockery, and a healthy supply of red wine. There were numberless tins, which amused me in a household for one. 'What a lot of tins!' I exclaimed. 'You certainly don't intend to starve, Aunt Ursula.'

'Case of emergency, child,' she answered. '"Day Excursion Blackpool" was islanded for two weeks once. The sea came across the neck. Always keep a store-cupboard now.'

'But surely you didn't stay here all on your own, did you?' I asked, amazed.

'Of course I did, child. Don't be so local. It was a holiday from the world.'

'Still, Aunt Ursula, why didn't someone come over and fetch you in a boat?'

'Nobody knew I was here, thank heaven! But you're boring me, child. Pass me that frying-pan.'

Dollop! In went some olive-oil, and we soon had a couple of eggs spitting in the pan. 'Sunny side up or both sides?' she asked, turning both eggs over in the pan to save waiting for a reply. 'Don't stand idle, child. It's bad for the circulation,' she continued. 'Plates and instruments over there,' she called, pointing in the direction of the cupboard with a hand which, I noticed, still wore her beautiful and very valuable bishop-ring.

I reached down some plates and put them to warm on the edge of the guard's stove. 'Aren't you afraid of burglars here, Aunt Ursula?' I asked.

'Oh dear! What a fatuous question, child!' she replied, exasperated.

'But it's so lonely here,' I plunged on regardless. 'And that ring, for instance.'

'Yes, it is very lovely.' She paused to look at it. 'Anyway, don't lose sleep over that,' she continued. 'It was given to me once by a burglar. I painted his portrait. Interesting little cockney. Really quite an authority on French falence. Wonder how many burglars have been hung in the Academy? He and his wife stayed with me here last summer, as a matter of fact. Thought they both looked so much better for the rest. You'll find the tablecloth over the brake. We'll eat in the studio.'

'Does that mean third-class?' I asked.

'What else could it mean!' she retorted.

DAY EXCURSION BLACKPOOL

I TOOK a lamp and went through the leather-lined corridor—the sort which, incidentally, I always have a horror of on a moving train—and found myself third-class in the studio. It was a riot of canvases, easels, and dirty crockery. There was an unmade bed in one corner, on which a marmalade cat was sleeping. I stumbled over a book that was lying on the floor, and the cat woke up. He blinked smilingly at the lamp.

I succeeded in excavating a table, which I cleared of its books and papers. Aunt Ursula entered almost immediately, with the eggs, salad, a loaf, a bottle of wine under one arm, and a round of cheese, which slipped out of her grasp and went rolling under the bed. I knelt down to retrieve it, but my arm wasn't long enough.

'Get the shunting-pole,' called Aunt Ursula, 'it's in the van.'

By the time I'd proceeded to a Cox's orange pippin, which I found on a luggage-rack, Aunt Ursula had forgotten all about me and was deep in her work at the far end of the coach. She looked like a giant toby-jug, I thought.

The idea of coffee tickled me, and I went to make some. Having made it, I tipped some milk (the tinned variety) into a little jug, and returned to the studio. I poured out two cups and then went to warm myself over the little stove. I amused myself by reading the initials carved on the woodwork, and counted the hearts and arrows. Gradually I worked myself round to the corner where Aunt Ursula was working. There was a large unfinished canvas on the easel. She knew it was too surrealistic for me and helped me out by saying: 'It's going to be called "The Flood." Started it last winter. Simply can't tackle it at the moment. I'm going to wait till the tides come up again this winter.'

I spent the rest of the evening collecting up the dirty crockery in the studio. I salvaged three dozen coffee-cups, fifteen saucers, a pile of plates, and a handful of verdigris teaspoons. The spoons, I decided, must have been used by previous visitors, as Aunt Ursula invariably stirred her coffee with the end of a paint-brush, and occasionally the wrong end at that!

By midnight, I'd finished the washing-up and was ready for bed. 'Is there a Minnehaha?' I asked, praying desperately that I shouldn't have to brave the night outside.

'Always next to the guard's-van,' she replied.

'Oh yes, of course!' I said, and realised it was right in front of my eyes. It said 'ENGAGED,' but the door yielded to my push, opening with a grating noise because of the sand on the floor.

I wished Aunt Ursula good-night. She was deeply engrossed in her painting.

'Sleep tight,' she said without turning round, and I retired to my first-class carriage.

I COULDN'T get to sleep. There were too many noises. My window rattled and a foghorn boomed at regular intervals from the lifeboat station along the coast. I tried to time its frequency. One and two and three and four and . . .

I must have dropped off to sleep. The next thing I knew, the morning sun was looking inquisitively through my window. The wind had dropped.

I jumped out of bed and ran to the window barefooted. The tide was out and the honey beach had forehead wrinkles, looking puzzled because it was a soft morning now after the wild night. I dressed quickly and crept into the guard's-van. I peeped into the studio, Aunt Ursula, still in her clothes, was sound asleep, and likewise the marmalade cat on the table. The lamp was still burning and its pale flame seemed crude in the morning sun.

I turned out the lamp and opened the door as quietly as possible, though, doubtlessly, with less skill than Aunt Ursula's connoisseur on French falence. I walked round the tamarisk bushes to the back of the coaches facing the sea. There was a rough grassy plot decorated with boulders and a couple of salt-white ghosts of dead trees. I guessed these had been hurled up by winter tides. In less than a dozen steps I was across the grassy patch, over the sea-defence, and on to the shingle bank, with the beach smiling in front of me.

I walked along the beach in the direction of the end of Rocky Point. I could see a jagged mound sticking up like an iceberg a little way out to sea. By rights, I felt, it should be dotted with seagulls doing their morning toilet. But strangely enough there wasn't a gull to be seen.

Towards the end of the headland, I came across the wreckage of some old coaches. The sea had obviously washed over them from

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time to time as they were full of boulders and camouflaged with seaweed—the stringy sort you always find after a very rough tide. I clambered over one old coach and found a dead crab in a bath-tub.

I walked on to the beach again. Every few steps I came across an ironical man-made detail, such as a chimney-pot, a plank studded with rusty nails, a saucepan, a coat-hanger, and even a long leather boot like the ones the German soldiers used to wear.

The chimney-pot, the ruined coaches, and the uncanny absence of gulls worried me somehow. The sun was doing its best to reassure me, and I turned back to the Excursion, for the hour was getting on. Tinkerbell was sitting up on the roof washing himself, so I guessed that Aunt Ursula was up and about by now.

AS I climbed into the guard's-van the fragrance of coffee greeted me. Aunt Ursula was bending over the stove stirring some porridge. 'Been looking for driftwood?' she asked as I came in.

'Well, not exactly, I'm afraid,' I answered. 'I've been exploring.'

We ate breakfast on the verandah of the guard's-van. We were just finishing when I noticed a figure cycling towards us. 'Who would that be, Aunt Ursula?' I pointed towards the figure.

'George, I expect,' she replied. 'He comes down from the village twice a week. Brings my fodder, and letters if there are any.'

By then, the lad had reached us and propped his cycle up against my car. 'Going to keep 'ems in this ole bus, Mrs Gullyford,' he called out laughing, immensely pleased with his little joke. He lifted his basket off the cycle and staggered towards us with it.

He was wearing a leather jerkin which flapped open to expose a fearfully loud American tie. It was a vivid blue silk affair on which was painted a plump pink nude. He plonked his basket down on the floor of the van, and introduced with him a sickliness of verbera, which I diagnosed as cheap hair-cream.

'Mail, George?' Aunt Ursula demanded.

'Yus, Mrs Gullyford,' replied George, delving in his trouser-pocket for a crumpled packet of letter. 'Lor luv a rabbit, wot a night!' he continued. 'The lifeboat down the coast 'ad to 'op out twice.'

Aunt Ursula wasn't listening, so George turned his attention to me. 'Dunno if Rocky Point will be 'ere next year,' he went on brightly. 'It's only 'arf 'ere now as it is, yer know.'

'Really?' I said. 'Do you mean some of it has already gone into the sea?'

'Hoh yus, indeed,' said George, very glad to find someone who wasn't familiar with the details of the coast erosion. 'Height coaches and an 'undred yards of land all got heaten hup.'

'Oh dear, how simply frightful!'

'Yus, it was that.' George pursued his narrative, before my astonishment subsided. 'It 'appened one Toosday night just after the hequinuptial gales—'

'Equinoctial, not -nuptial, George,' cried out Aunt Ursula without looking up from her letters.

'Sorry, Mrs Gullyford,' said George. 'Well, as I was saying, we 'ad one 'ell of a night of it even on the mainland at our place. It was the 'ighest tide we've ever 'ad at Rocky Point. Caw, wot a biffer! Course, no one was drowned, 'appily. The coaches were all lying empty after the summer season. Mrs Gullyford was all on 'er own-y-o, and when I arrives down 'ere nine o'clock of Wednesday morning as per usual, wot d'ye think I finds?'

'I'm afraid I really couldn't imagine,' I admitted.

'Well, I finds the waves lapping around underneath "Day Excursion Blackpool" and Mrs Gullyford fast asleep in bed, snoring 'er 'ead off!'

Aunt Ursula rose now from her letters and presented George with a card for the post, and a shopping-list for the village store. 'Thank you, George,' said Aunt Ursula, and dropped a couple of half-crowns into his basket.

'Thanks ever so, Mrs Gullyford,' said George. He jumped down from the guard's-van and swung on to his bike. 'Toodle-oo. See you Saturday,' he cried, and was off, bouncing over the dry ground.

I STAYED for a week on the Excursion.

Each day was much the same. In the morning, I used to collect driftwood and picked sea-spinach for our lunch. The afternoons were lazy, and I have to confess I spent an awful lot of time playing at ducks and drakes. It was the fault of the beach; there were too many temptingly flat stones.

MID-WEST, MID-CENTURY

I enjoyed the evenings in particular. A railway-coach is ideal for getting up a fug. The more the wind howled the more we piled on driftwood. We didn't talk, and the only noise to punctuate the indoor quietness was the occasional loud report of a chestnut roasting on top of the guard's stove.

When I said good-bye, I felt as if I were just about to return to a different world, a world which Aunt Ursula had apparently forgotten about. 'I've had a lovely week. Thank you so much, Aunt Ursula,' I said.

'Glad you came,' she said, as she shoved Tinkerbell quickly through the observation window. 'Love to Arthur and the litter.'

HOME once again, I was soon caught up into the domestic whirl. The children's half-term came and went, and nanny and I embarked upon the exhausting business of Christmas shopping.

Then one day in January ugly news of Rocky Point reared itself out of the blue. Arthur met Keiler at the club. The tide, we learned, had crashed over the sea-defences and in one night had reclaimed Rocky Point—

'Day Excursion Blackpool,' and all. The lifeboat had been too late.

I was just going to say 'Poor Aunt Ursula,' but stopped. She would never forgive me that remark. Pity was odious to her, and grief even more so. I tried not to think how terrifying the storm must have been, and how greedy the sea must have looked as it lunged against the sea-defence and then leapt to crumble the brick piles with devouring waves. The whole would have been borne for a moment on the shoulders of the strong waves, the guard's-van looking absurdly like a Noah's ark with its verandahs at both ends. Then the Channel, tiring of his pleasure, would have washed all these toys down into the midnight recesses of his deep pockets, swaggering away again to leave a sad morning behind him.

Arthur and I visited Rocky village the following summer. The Point had truly vanished, and the only thing which hinted at its previous existence was a notice at the end of the road:

DANGER
COAST EROSION

Mid-West, Mid-Century

Life at an American University

T. N. CAPPIE WOOD, B.A., M.Sc., F.R.G.S.

A THINKER once said: 'He who lives upon hope will die fasting.' So it was with a certain feeling of accomplishment that I found myself steaming out of New York's palatial Grand Central Station bound for a year at a Mid-Western university. A secret hope which had been nurtured for many years was about to be realised. I was only in my callow teens when I first had a burning desire to demolish those fanciful ivory castles so

laboriously built up by the technicolour fabrications of Hollywood film-producers. I lived for the day when I would arrive in God's own country and see for myself whether or not Providence had provided for every need and whim of the 140 million denizens of this land of milk and honey—or, as a wit has said, this land of mink and money. The ivory castles felt the initial tremors of demolition during my first twenty-four hours in New

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York, where my eyes were opened to the dirt and squalor that exists within a stone's throw of swank Fifth Avenue. The next few weeks in the heart of the corn-belt completed the destruction, and upon the rubble of exploded misconceptions I proceeded to build up a more accurate picture of the American way of life.

EVEN the unaccustomed luxury of a Pullman sleeper did not prevent me from waking early, and, as I peered through the double glass of the window, I saw dawn breaking over the intense flatness of the Indiana farmlands. I was well and truly in the corn-belt. We whistled through several cow-towns and over numerous level-crossings which boasted of no gates. It was nearly mid-day by the time we pulled into the university town of Champaign-Urbana.

I climbed down from the train and was greeted by the two institutions of American stations—a negro porter and a yellow taxicab. I made use of them both and soon found myself on the campus of America's third largest university—the University of Illinois. It looked as if all the 23,000 students were there that morning, the boys in their blue jeans, the girls in their sloppy joes; it was as crowded as Putney Bridge on Boat Race Day. There were groups of gum-chewing undergrads everywhere, swapping yarns about their experiences during the previous vacation. The more studious looking types were hurrying from one building to another clutching little bits of paper, which, I found later, had to be signed by a whole list of academic potentates; others, again, propped themselves up against trees and smugly thumbed through a pile of new textbooks—they had come off best in the free-for-all taking place at the campus bookstore.

All too soon it became apparent that I, too, had to go through the mill at the local 'bookateria'; the scars of that battle remained long after the pristine freshness of my purchases had vanished. To the student mind, queueing for books was considered distinctly unvirile. Virility, a he-man complex, stems from overmuch attention to strip cartoons, and is worshipped in the seats of higher learning. Sport, especially of the strong arm variety, has eclipsed all else. This over-emphasised adulation of muscle-power is first nurtured in the high-schools, where to be top

of one's class is to court ostracism. The authorities have bowed to this trend, and husky students whose grey-matter has coagulated through lack of use can now enroll at most universities and take their Bachelor of Science in physical culture. Still, on reflection, I suppose this is better than some of the recognised degree courses which are unblushingly listed in the University Bulletin and cover such non-intellectual subjects as basket-weaving, fly-casting, juggling, and, for the girls, deportment and ballroom dancing. The obvious has happened: students now take the easiest courses instead of those which would give them a leg up on to the hallowed ladder of individual materialism.

Educational progress in the direction of examinations has reached the peak in conservation of mental energy. The examinations consist of a sheaf of question-papers which are posed in the form of a statement that is either right or wrong. The fortunate student has only to indicate his opinion on the veracity of the statement by means of a cross in the appropriate column. There are three outstanding advantages of this examination system—it can be given to students who have not mastered the art of writing; the intellectual moron has a fifty-fifty chance of being right; and the examination is marked mechanically by an ingenious electronic device. There was a minor riot when I suggested to my students that they put their thoughts down in writing, instead of filling in a form that looked remarkably like a football-pool coupon. When the lecture-room had simmered down to a dull roar, I was obliged to understand that this cross-section of American youth refused to tolerate any 'dog-goned British ideas,' so, not wanting a second Bunker Hill, I yielded to their wishes. I left the room murmuring something about casting no more pearls.

There were great blanks in the average student's general education, I found almost immediately. For instance, there was one 18-year-old fellow who could not give me the name of the King of Britain, whereas he was word-perfect in the life-history of Babe Ruth; also there was the Doctor of Philosophy who had never heard of the city of Canberra; and, again, the spelling showed a high degree of originality. Phonetic spelling, had of course, to be accepted, because the most widely-read paper in the Mid-West—the Anglophobic *Chicago Tribune*—sponsored reformed spell-

ing. I made a mental note of an intimation I once saw on a notice-board: 'Geographical Lecture Tonite: Thru the Mid-West by Frate-Train.'

It was not long before I realised that the life of this university revolved round the football team. I hasten to add that the only similarity between British and American football is that they are both played on a grass pitch. The American form is something like an illegal relation to rugby. Play is with an oval ball, and there is passing and tackling; but not only can the man with the ball be tackled, it appeared to me that any player near the ball was liable to get tackled also. As soon as the kick-off whistle is blown, the field is a mass of pole-axed players, everyone having tackled everyone else. Other points of interest which should be explained to the uninitiated are that before a player ventures on to the field he protects the body beautiful with such a mass of upholstered superstructure that he takes on the appearance of a robust version of Frankenstein's monster. Another thing which, through British eyes, just ruins the game, is the superfluity of reserve players. Although only fifteen men in each team are allowed on the pitch at one time, there are usually about sixty men in the official team. This has developed a high degree of specialisation, and, when the tide of battle turns, the captain, or any of the five coaches, can signal to one of the three referees and demand that the game be stopped while the offensive team is substituted for the defensive one. There is one esteemed individual whose sole job is to run on to the field and take all the free-kicks or goal-kicks and return to the touch-line amid jeers or cheers, depending on his success.

It is said that overmuch whistle blowing is ruining British rugby, but the critics should witness an American game, where I noted that for one reason or another the whistle goes every eleven seconds. The game is so lacking in spontaneous thrills that the crowd must be urged and bludgeoned into vocal encouragement by the aid of a squad of megaphoned cheer-leaders who lead their supporters in all kinds of adapted Indian war-cries to the accompaniment of cartwheels and back-somersaults. One of the greatest controversies which raged throughout the year was over the adoption of female cheer-leaders for

the Illinois team. Judging by all the meetings and deliberations of student councils, sports committees, the University Senate, and the Board of Trustees, and by the testing of opinion by public referendums and Gallup polls, one would have thought that the issue was one of grave international significance. Finally a decision was handed down to the effect that female cheer-leaders had an important part to play in the life of the community, so now the 75,000 spectators are to be encouraged by a feminine display on the touchline which is one part military and three parts anatomical.

This vote of censure on the football mania would be incomplete without explaining that the magnetic field of the sport extends far beyond the delirious three hours on a Saturday afternoon. Every Friday night a Pep Rally dominates the social time-table. This weird ritual takes place after dark at some central place, and it is a point of honour that every supporter (which means every student on the campus) should attend it. A large bonfire illuminates the proceedings, while several rather amateurish instrumentalists render exceedingly amateurish impromptu numbers in a delightful variety of keys and discords. This, however, only adds to the herd-instinct of general enthusiasm and bonhomie. A few squibs are set off, which momentarily disperse sections of the crowd, but they surge forward again chanting a garbled version of some Red Indian refrain. When the organisers of this disorganised event feel the psychological moment has arrived they switch on a battery of searchlights which illuminate the balcony of some convenient building. Before the expectant hush has had time to soothe one's misused eardrums, the chief coach steps into the blaze of light and adulation, and this invariably calls forth America's answer to the Hampden roar. This nabob of the upper hierarchy, whose salary is second only to that of the President of the University, craves silence. He makes an impassioned speech about the great sporting traditions of the University and the paramount need for a victory on the morrow; this is delivered with so much heart-plucking sincerity and oratorical finesse that one would be excused for thinking that the speaker was reciting the Gettysburg Address. Then, after the stars of the football team have assembled on the balcony to the noisy approval of the mob, the coach hands the microphone over to the

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captain, who is invited to say a few words. No one seems to notice the supreme bathos when he merely draws out a laconic: 'We'll beat them guys.' So ends the weekly Pep Rally, and I left feeling more than ever convinced that uncritical hero-worship is pagan.

The effects of football prestige reach to the very roots of most State universities. The members of the team get all kinds of privileges, both seen and unseen. I was once told of the case of a certain history lecturer who found himself without a job after he had failed a prominent member of the team. Even the university's coffers are enriched by the benefactions from proud alumni who wish to be associated with a college of such great sporting achievements. It is not an exaggeration to say that this is one of the causes why many of the top academical men are lured away from the older institutions whose means are more limited.

It is well known that the prestige of the University of Chicago has declined since its President banned football. He is alleged to have said: 'When I feel I want some exercise, I lie down till the feeling passes.' One day I visited this university, which was built with the Rockefeller millions and is a fine architectural example of pseudo-Gothic. The professor who was showing me round was careful to steer me clear of the deserted football stadium, and remarked modestly: 'This is not a great university—merely the best in the world.' It has a well-founded reputation for philosophy, and it is on record that two students were heard discussing an undergraduate in the following terms: 'Sure she's cute, but a materialistic little dialectic.'

I WAS greatly amused by the surfeit of 'councillors' and psychologists whom the university employ. Apart from hamburger stalls, their offices are about the most popular haunts on the campus. Their sole aim is to help freshmen to adjust themselves to whatever freshmen *have* to adjust themselves to. Most colleges and universities have a psychiatric infirmary where the teenagers go to be cured of colds in their souls as routinely as they would seek a panacea for athlete's foot or a hangover.

The Freud dispensary at Illinois did a thriving business with their student clientele who dropped in to have their psyches over-

hauled at regular intervals. The main affliction was apparently emotional immaturity followed by 'anxiety tension.' It is only natural for a student fresh from school to feel immature, confused, and a trifle insecure, but that is all part of the growing-up process. Surely the purpose of university life is to teach the student to be an adult in his own time. A student out on his own for the first time starts some tentative motions towards manhood, making some mistakes, profiting by some, and acquiring some toughness of fibre in the process. But the present American tendency seems to be an attempt to replace mother's soft shoulder and father's slipper with an ersatz approximation of the same—a Wailing Wall of the mind, a crying towel, and a comfortable couch to help the young to stay emotionally young. One of my friends parodied the situation thus: 'So you've got a problem, sonny? Don't wrestle with it and try to solve it. Take it to the tame skull-feeler and let him explain all your puzzlements in terms of an early affection for a rubber duck or a teddy-bear—Nuts!'

This is just one of the many luxuries which most American universities can afford. It is small wonder that the Illinois State legislature has to sign a cheque for 62 million dollars every year to keep its university functioning on levels which would be classed as affluent by British standards. There seems to be a friendly rivalry among the more important States to see which one can provide the best amenities and the greatest number of distractions for the students. The Illinois campus boasts of a football stadium which can seat 75,000 spectators, an auditorium vaster than the London Palladium, a cadet corps armoury big enough to allow tanks to carry out manoeuvres under cover and capable on occasion of being converted into a full-size athletic field. It was at the armoury that I attended an indoor athletic meeting and saw a slim 19-year-old student pole-vault the fantastic height of 15 feet 3 inches. Other attractions to keep the student from wearying over his studies include an ice-rink, two swimming-pools, an unknown number of gymnasiums, two golf-courses, and one of the country's largest airports, where students go to take their Bachelor of Science degree in aeronautics.

The whole university is a self-contained unit and can operate with remarkably little outside assistance. All the buildings are heated from

one huge power-plant and the steam is pumped through underground pipes all over the campus. During the winter the pattern of the pipes is traced out on the ground, as it is the only place where snow melts. Discipline is maintained by a large posse of policemen equipped with the regulation Colt and baton. Their busiest time is at night keeping couples off the shadier parts of the campus. Other services include an internal postal system, a radio station, a health service complete with clinics and hospital.

An admirable feature of every university is the facilities offered to students who want to, or must, work their way through college. The majority of jobs on the campus are done part-time by students. The Union, for instance, is run solely by part-time students; while it is no uncommon thing to go to a faculty cocktail party and accept a drink from a white-uniformed waiter who, during the day, is one of your students.

ONE of the great predilections of the American mind is a profound yearning to belong to an association, club, society, guild, or anything else covering the amiable but ineffective proceedings of groups of civic-conscious citizens with time on their hands. This desire to belong to a group is fostered by the university fraternities and sororities. These esoteric establishments rejoice in the names of two or more letters in the Greek alphabet, and the more important ones have chapters in every college. The greater one's sporting achievements, the more fraternities are likely to offer one membership. With sororities, the main criterion appears to be feminine pulchritude, although father's bank-balance is not altogether neglected, as the more new Cadillacs that can be parked outside the house of the sorority the higher the esteem in which its members are held. All prospective candidates are invited to stay at their future fraternity or sorority house for the last week of the previous term. This, for some unaccountable reason, is called 'rushing week,' when all new members are vetted. There are, of course, many disappointed contestants, and the social prestige of membership has reached such a pitch that many of the unsuccessful candidates apply to other universities, while it is on record that nervous breakdowns have been precipitated by non-admission.

On being elected to a fraternity, the new members undergo a week's initiation period, which, to the uninitiated, appears to be the pinnacle of mental retardment. For instance, a neophyte will be forbidden to go upstairs without declaring in a loud voice his humble sorrow at treading on the sacred and most illustrious carpet of the Alpha Fraternity; others will have to go upstairs backwards on all fours, or maybe to move a huge coal pile from one place to another piece by piece, and then replace it. At the beginning of a new term it is no surprise to see a student walking to classes in his pyjamas or leading a docile cow behind him. Two of my students arrived in class one day both with vast placards round their necks proclaiming to which fraternity they belonged, one leading a gigantic St Bernard dog, the other carrying a painter's ladder, brushes, and pots, which he carefully stacked against one of the walls of the lecture-room.

Once he is a fully-fledged member of a fraternity, the student is admitted to the privilege of wearing the ostentatious jewellery appropriate to his particular chapter. This consists of an outsize signet-ring and a brooch which makes certain that any other bird of the same feather may hail him and start a friendly conversation about mutual non-acquaintances.

MY days on the campus came swiftly to a close. All too soon I found myself leaning over the guard-rail of the *Queen Elizabeth* waiting for the last hawkers to be cast off, and, as I watched the excited crowd of well-wishers on the quayside, a host of recollections tried to sort themselves out in my memory.

This, indeed, had been an eventful year—one of new impressions, new friendships, and new opinions of the great land of America and its people. I left with a much clearer idea of how our blood-brothers across the Atlantic work, play, and think. Their country is unique and fascinating—and full of contrasts. It is a land geared, adapted, and dedicated to its youth. It throbs with an intense vitality which is reflected everywhere. In many ways these friendly and uninhibited people are like us but they have developed their own national characteristics and habits, some of which we could do without—but others we might well adopt.



African Fisherman

JEFFERY TEIGH

ALL the long, hot afternoon old Ramathani sat on the beach. Behind him the palm-trees offered shade and in the thatched huts the men of the fishing-fleet lay sleeping. It was time for rest, but Ramathani sat on in the sun, staring unblinkingly at the far blue rim of the sea, his back against the side of a beached canoe.

It was a fine canoe. The men of Mji Mwema, the Pleasant Village, were proud of their craft. The sharp prows were painted red or blue and given eyes. Names were burnt into the wood, too—'Laughter' and 'Remembrance,' 'Sleep Quietly' and 'Grow Rich.' That idle fellow Saad Abdallah had a whole proverb along the side of his: 'Even the latecomer fills his net.'

The boats had come in at noon, as they always did in the days of the south-west monsoon, on the top of the breeze. At first there was nothing but the great bright emptiness of the ever-sounding, many-coloured sea. Then, suddenly, from the hollow of the waves, far out, a canoe came into sight, a single tiny triangle of sail, white against the blue, then another and another as the whole fleet sped towards the land.

They travelled fast in a stiff breeze, these slim, outrigger ngalawas. With the waves

curling back from their bows they slipped in over the reef, racing towards the long palm-edged beach, while the children and the old people hurried from their huts to greet the boats and to inspect the catch.

There was noise and colour and excitement as the sails were run down and the fishermen waded ashore, holding their catch aloft. Out on the warm sand the market opened straight-away; bargains were made, fish were packed into round wicker baskets and then strapped on to the carriages of bicycles, and off went the traders to get their profits from the townsmen.

Nets were hung up to dry and the canoes were pulled up on to the shore. The fishermen went off to eat and to sleep, and quiet settled down again on the long, bright beach. The palm-trees sang and the casuarinas whispered in the breeze; every now and then the lazy thud of a falling coconut broke the unchanging rhythm of the sea.

To-day it had all happened as it had happened a hundred times before. But for old Ramathani the timeless tenor of life had broken. One ngalawa had not returned. Ahmed, Ramathani's son, had not come in with the fleet—Ahmed, the gay, the bold one, who would race over the sea, standing

balanced in his narrow craft, waving his paddle in salute.

The old man had asked the others: 'Where is my son, where is Ahmed?' They had shrugged away his insistence. Ahmed had headed further out alone, as he often did. There was a big sea getting up; they had warned him, but Ahmed had never yet been known to take advice. This fishing was a chancy affair. From time to time someone went out who did not return—and who should know better than Ramathani himself? In his day he had had a reputation for recklessness, taking his ngalawa out in all weathers, tempting the gods, though never too far, it seemed, for somehow he always managed to get home.

As the old man sat looking at the sea he thought of his own fishing days. He no longer went out, not since he had found to his shame that it pained his stiff arms even to use the steering paddle. Now his fishing was confined to gathering sea-urchins for bait or to luring octopuses from their holes under the rocks. He could still drive his pole forcefully into the deep crannies and pull out the writhing, tentacled creatures. They tried hard to get a grip, but he knew how to turn them inside out with one experienced flick, and that was the end of master octopus. Well, sooner or later all fishermen came to reef pottering, and he had had his day.

There was nothing he had not tried in his time—netting, hook and line, setting pots for crayfish. Ah, remembered the old man, it was crayfish that brought the best returns. Even ten years and more ago the prices the Europeans would pay for a few crayfish would buy a sail and a pair of paddles. Bongoyo was the place for the best catches, the island far out to sea where most fishermen did not venture to go. But that was where the huge crayfish were to be found, coloured and glinting like the sea with the sun shining through it. 'Oh-ho!' chuckled Ramathani, forgetting his heavy heart in his thoughts of the past. 'Old rascal you, Bongoyo! You nearly finished me off!'

For once, years ago, Ramathani had left Mji Mwema on a windy night when the moon came uncertainly through hurrying clouds. He had sailed fast, but Bongoyo was far away and it was after dawn when he reached the island. And an evil dawn it was, too, yellow

and gusty, with a big sea smashing on the shore. He had lowered his sail, and his canoe, half full of water, pitched hard as he watched the sand sucked up and flung in a welter of amber spume on to the coral. Truly, Bongoyo had been bewitched that day. Never before had he failed to find a way over the reef, but, defeated for once, he had set sail for home.

Then all the demons of the unfriendly sea smote him. A sudden squall ripped his pitiful little sail from its crooked mast. The ngalawa heeled over despite its broad outriggers. Reaching forward to save his wicker pots, his hand lost its grip upon his paddle, and suddenly Ramathani knew how easily solitary fishermen met their end. Without the means to sail or steer, his boat half-waterlogged and being swept past the land by the tide-race that gave Bongoyo its evil reputation, there was nothing he could do but wait for death. Some day, somewhere, the Indian Ocean would wash a battered canoe on to a lonely beach, but Ramathani would have gone down into the indifferent sea long before that.

As he drifted out to sea the waves were not so violent, but his small boat was tossed and battered cruelly. There was nothing he could do. He was not even afraid. This was the way fishermen had died along the coast ever since they first took to the sea in hollowed tree-trunks. Back in the Pleasant Village, when the sun sank and all good Mohammedans turned to the east, there would be one less prayer-mat spread on the sand. It would not be the first time: it would not be the last.

Day crept into night, and still Ramathani sat silent, solitary, waiting. His canoe had not sunk under him, but the water was over his waist. The wind went down and the waves quietened. The stars looked very near, and Ramathani drifted into coma.

The next morning the sun brought a flicker of life into his numbed body. Slowly his eyes looked on to a transformed sea, blue and still and kindly once more—kindly, indeed, for here was life and hope again, in the shape of a dhow lumbering along under its huge curving sail.

Ten minutes later Ramathani, his thirst quenched and hunger-pangs yielding to pungent slices of dried shark-meat, was hearing from the Arab captain how he had been blown off his course for Zanzibar. 'Truly,' said the captain, 'God has been kind to you this day,' and Ramathani hastily

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emptied his mouth to mutter a fervent 'Allah be praised.'

That had been his nearest call. The people of the village had made light of it. Indeed, Ramathani's father had been furious at the loss of sail and paddle, and did not seem to consider his son's return from the dead to be much compensation. To this day Ramathani remembered the sting of his parent's scorn.

THERE had been other moments of danger, of course. There was the time when he had been flung out of his canoe by a giant sting-ray, which he had harpooned in a fit of youthful enthusiasm as it lay basking on the surface. Once he had dived overboard to noose a turtle and had got his feet entangled in the rope and nearly drowned. Often he had seen the swift, merciless shape of sharks gliding backwards and forwards beneath his canoe, waiting for one incautious moment.

Ay-ee! thought Ramathani, that was the way Musa had gone, falling overboard on a fine calm day when all the canoes were close together in a combined netting operation. There was no danger, and how they had laughed when Musa, unsteady from last night's beer, had stood up to ease his cramped legs and had gone over, splash! 'That'll cool your head!' they had shouted, and Musa, resting his arm upon his outrigger before pulling himself back into the canoe, had laughed sheepishly, too.

Then there was a swirl in the water alongside him. His grin turned to a look of shocked surprise. His hand was flung up as if in protest, and the sea turned red. Musa was not there any more, and there had been an empty ngalawa to tow home.

YES, it was a life of many hazards, but there was good money in it. Since the Wazungu had increased in the big town further down the coast the demand for food from the sea had grown vastly and a fisherman could get a nice dip into the white man's pocket if he kept his wits about him.

Ramathani smiled to himself as he remembered how for a time he used to sail his canoe to a beach near the road to the town instead of coming back to the village with the rest of the fleet. There he would meet a smart young cook with a very fine opinion of himself. 'My master must have

the best fish for his guests. The Governor himself dines often at our house.' Ramathani knew it was all a lie, but if his master did not mind paying five shillings for a fine kole-kole, with the colour still gleaming in its scales, that was all honest earnings for a poor fisherman. It was good while it lasted, but, of course, after a while the other fishermen from Mji Mwema got to hear about it, and competition reduced prices sadly.

After that, Ramathani bought a bicycle and sent one of his sons round with fresh fish from door to door in the town. That was good, too, and kept the profits away from those rascally middlemen—until his son had smashed the bicycle.

THE old man's thoughts checked suddenly. Son! He had many sons, but Ahmed, his youngest, Ahmed, the only one who had remained faithful to the fishing tradition of his family, to whom his father had lent his finest canoe 'Rest at Noon,' had not come home with the fleet to-day. Ramathani sighed and his old bones were weary in the sun.

The wind was dropping now. It was still fresh, but soon it would die. The fishermen would come yawning from their huts. Repairs would be done and the sound of the adze would echo down the beach, mingling with the steady pounding of maize in a dozen mortars, while the slow smoke rose through the thatched roofs into the palm-trees. The sun would go down and the evening meal would be eaten. An hour before dawn the breeze would stir again and the fleet would put out. Only, Ahmed would not be there.

Ramathani's old eyes strained to the horizon and his feeble heart quickened at what he saw. Rising and falling with the waves was a small black speck. No patch of white was spread above it, no wave curled back from its bow. Ramathani's experience told him that here was a man, tired beyond endurance, paddling home, having lost his sail far out at sea. The canoe came nearer. Ahmed, my son, sang the old man's heart, comes back from the deep, undefeated as was always I.

Ramathani rose stiffly and hobbled down to the sea to meet his son. He saw the stained water swilling in the canoe; he saw the lashings of the outriggers torn and stripped by heavy waves; he took in the gash on

CURTAINS FOR THE HOUSEBOAT ?

Ahmed's thigh, the greyness of exhaustion under his skin. Lastly he studied the great razor-toothed barracuda that filled the narrow boat. His heart swelled with pride as he read the story of battle and conquest with this dangerous prey from the sea.

Then he spoke coldly to his wounded, weary son. 'Here is shame indeed,' he said. 'Low stands our name to-day! That any son of mine should lose his sail!'

He watched Ahmed drag the great fish from the canoe and stumble up the shore to eat and to sleep. He would not sail again that night with a wound like that upon his leg, and yet

they could not afford to miss a voyage. A few good crayfish, now, they would restore the lost sail and provide a fine new set of lashings!

Old Ramathani waded out to the canoe as it rested on the water. He ran his hand along the friendly, well-remembered gunwale, and all the sea's spirit whispered strongly to his blood. To-night, old one, his heart exulted secretly, you shall be strong once more! While Ahmed sleeps, once more shall you take your boat to far Bongoyo! Stiffly, but with great gladness bright within him, old Ramathani went to his hut to fetch his spare sail and his well-loved crayfish pots.

Curtains for the Houseboat ?

DONALD HARKER

IN its heyday the houseboat was the pampered darling of the inland waterways. With its gleaming paintwork and shining brass, its hanging creepers and flower-boxes, it graced the shady banks of the River Thames in the more secluded reaches. Edwardian visitors found it charming. Authority smiled on it—and no one would have dared to suggest that its removal might improve the landscape. But times have changed. To-day, the smiles of approval have turned to frowns, for, since the War, Britain's houseboat community has grown so fast that the rivers are becoming congested. Some local authorities want the floating homes to be drastically reduced in number.

The houseboat's fall from favour is not difficult to understand. In the leisurely pre-war days, when there was no shortage of brick-built dwellings, houseboats were few and far between and were often used only for week-end bathing-parties and summer holidays. Hitler's bombs changed all that, however. For hundreds of married couples forced into furnished rooms, the free-

and-easy life of the houseboat acquired new attractions.

When the Government advertised ex-naval assault-craft for sale, some eighty thousand eager house-hunters sent in replies. Many a gratuity was spent in equipping one of the blunt-nosed craft which in the war years had run the gauntlet of fire from enemy-occupied Europe. Where soldiers in steel helmets had once crouched over their rifles, waiting, with pounding hearts, for the signal to wade ashore, neat little cabins with gaily-coloured curtains sprang up to obliterate the battle-scars. The owners who bought up the vessels were proud of their handiwork, satisfied that their river homes compared favourably with many homes on land. Not unpleasant to the eye, they were dry, warm, and easy to run—a good return for the £1000 or so invested.

So far so good. But the trouble began when other, less fortunate, house-hunters started taking to the water in worn-out craft, whose rightful place was in the breaker's yard. Side by side with the trim, watertight houseboats, a new and ugly colony of patched-up schooners

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and derelict barges began to litter the quiet creeks and bywaters of the English countryside. Some of these ancient craft sank after a few weeks; many of those that remained were abandoned to the water-rats.

TO-DAY, the position has become so serious that local authorities have decided to act. Already, at Leigh-on-Sea—controlled by the Southend Corporation—the houseboat colony along the foreshore has virtually disappeared. What was formerly a blot on the landscape, and a serious matter for a town which earns its living from holidaymakers, is now no longer a problem for the residents. A danger to health has also been removed.

To take this action, Southend Corporation had to obtain additional powers under a special Act of Parliament. Now the Essex County Council has followed their example, successfully promoting a Parliamentary bill to extend similar powers for controlling the houseboat to other local authorities in the county.

Even away from the seaside resorts, the floating homes are not popular. The Port of London Authority, who control the Thames as far up as Teddington, are no Friends of the Houseboat. 'We don't intend to have our stretch of the river cluttered up with broken-down hulks,' one of their officials told me bluntly. 'We pour cold water on the houseboat idea whenever we can. People must understand that the River Thames is a vital commercial highway, not a housing-estate. Do we sympathise with the house-hunters? Of course we do, but, believe me, the Thames is no answer to their problems.'

To enforce the law, the Port of London Authority inspectors patrol the waterway at regular intervals. They give no mooring permits for houseboats. But along certain frontages, notably in Chelsea, where a hard nucleus of painters are firmly lodged in their studios, houseboats can still be moored without the Authority's permission. In these cases, however, the owner of the particular stretch of riverbank has to agree that the houseboat can stay, and there must be no obstruction to the river-going traffic.

The Thames Conservancy Board, who control the Thames from Teddington upwards, are a little more tolerant. Provided the registration fees are paid—£10 for boats up to 30 feet and £1 for each extra five feet—the houseboats can remain. Still, only a

strictly limited number of permits are issued each year. At present, there are one hundred and eighty. In the same way, the Docks and Inland Waterways Executive, who govern a wider network of canals and navigable rivers in Britain, charge a set fee for each houseboat moored on their waters. But the real power is in the hands of the individual local authorities, who can take action if the bylaws are infringed.

SO far, houseboats which have come into conflict with the law have mostly been able to take evasive action by moving further along the river. As the powers of local councils are extended, however, it will be more difficult for the houseboat families to find a new berth. Rather than become river-gypsies, many of them will probably return to land. If there is any indiscriminate hounding of the families from the waterways, it will be a pity, for, on a limited scale, riverboat accommodation does offer a partial solution to the housing problem.

A good houseboat is no ramshackle affair. There is enough room on the average converted assault-craft for three fair-sized compartments, as well as for a hip-bath or shower. By using filters, water can be taken straight from the river. Lighting is provided from a battery of accumulators, charged at regular intervals by a steam or petrol generator installed on board.

The houseboat-owners themselves are banding together for protection. Most of the communities have a group-leader who watches over their interests. When I was looking over one or two abandoned boats in a little creek near the seaside, a lanky, sun-bronzed young man in overalls clapped his hand on my shoulder. 'Looking for something, mate?' he asked. I told him what I was doing. 'That's all right,' he said. 'I thought you might have come from over there'—cocking his thumb towards the distant dome of the municipal buildings—'and you wouldn't have been so welcome.'

He was the group-leader. In a few, well-rehearsed phrases he put the case for the houseboat: 'Why should we be persecuted? Our boats are clean, and we harm no one. As for causing congestion on the rivers, that's nonsense. What ship do they expect to come sailing up a backwater like this—the *Queen Mary*? No, believe me, it's the big hotels who are behind it. They think their customers

will be offended at the sight of us. So they may, but no one would suggest pulling down a house on land because it spoils the view. We've got as much right to live where we like as anyone else, and we shan't give way without a struggle.'

So the battle is on. The coming months

should decide whether or not the houseboat has a future. And if the verdict goes against it, there will be many broken-hearted families, for, popular or not, the houseboat has one group of loyal supporters—the people who live on it. Most of them have no desire to go back to the land.

Cut-Price Luxury

Developments in Plastics

S. F. LOTT

EXCITING things are happening in the plastics industry. Discoveries are being made of which the public hears little but which are our only prospect of modern luxury goods at anything like reasonable cost. In fact, plastics development seems to be the one hope for overcoming the high prices of basic raw materials and getting back to an endurable cost of living. The time is ripe for plastics to take their place as the new raw materials of industry.

Thanks to mass-production methods, an increased demand for plastics will mean a cheaper product, whereas with the natural raw materials this rule works just the other way.

Nor is the industry content with producing mere substitutes for the older type of raw material. It is producing and planning to produce substances designed with special properties for special needs as against the old position where one simply accepted the properties nature saw fit to provide.

Plastics can combine strength with any degree of flexibility, can surpass the clarity of glass whilst being unbreakable, can do most jobs in place of metal and will not rust, can be used as a substitute for wood but do not need paint as they are self-coloured, and above all they can be mass-produced by the

moulding process—the more the merrier, and the cheaper.

THE idea of synthetic materials goes back a long way in history and we read in Marco Polo's account of his travels in India and Japan in 1285: 'The ships are all double-planked; they are not coated with pitch, as the country does not produce that substance, but the bottoms are smeared with the following preparation. The people take quicklime and hemp, which latter they cut small, and with these, when pounded together, they mix oil procured from a certain tree, making of the whole a kind of unguent, which retains its viscous properties more firmly and is a better material than pitch.'

It was, however, not until the Victorian age that industry took an interest in synthetic materials. In 1865, Alexander Parke of Birmingham, in his efforts to produce a synthetic horn, discovered that if nitro-cellulose, developed a few years earlier, was mixed with camphor and alcohol a horn-like mass was formed, and thus celluloid, the first of the plastics proper, was born. Since then a complex structure of materials under the general heading of 'plastics' has been evolved, ranging from the old hard bakelite to the

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new polythene, the plastic with the elastic memory.

Most plastics are built on a basis of carbon atoms. Thus home-produced coal is the fundamental raw material. The cellulose plastics, however, such as Cellophane, perspex, nylon, etc., still rely mainly on cotton linters—the second cut of fibre from cotton seeds after the long spinning fibre has been removed. Popular journalism makes much of nylon stockings from the garden apple-tree, but, in fact, the use of wood-pulp for the production of cellulose esters is dependent on a special type of timber in limited supply and is not likely to be developed greatly in this country where timber is already so scarce. We are more likely to exploit the possibilities of wheat straw, corn stalks, esparto, and bamboo, all of which have a high cellulose content. Thus, with coal-tar products, gases from air, water, and cellulose-type plant-life as the main raw materials, the plastics industry is not tied to the traditional industrial locations and is an admirable industry to site in depressed areas as is instanced by the immense new factory opened by the Plastics Division of the Distillers Group at Barry in North Wales. In fact, specialised factories sponsored by powerful industrial interests are springing up throughout the country. Gone are the immediate post-war years when plastics, to most people, meant shoddy plastic imitation articles at high prices.

LET us take a look at one or two widely scattered points on the plastics map of Great Britain, where new substances are being planned to bring cleanliness, brightness, and greater service into the lives of us all, and at the same time to stem the rising cost of living directly or indirectly at every point of purchase.

A Leicester firm has recently installed, at an outlay of upwards of £10,000, an American machine for making a wide range of polythene bottles, thus replacing containers previously made from metal, cardboard, and glass, all of which are scarce commodities of increasing cost. This machine is fully automatic and capable of high production at low running-cost. Free polythene powder—a product of coal and lime—is poured into a feed-hopper which automatically tips powder in controlled quantities into a heating-chamber, where it becomes like treacle. It is next forced along

heated pipes to a feed-chamber and so into moulds. Compressed air is then introduced into the moulds to blow the bottles into shape. The moulds are fitted to a revolving turntable, which controls speed of output. The mould-shapes can be clipped on and off with ease. Bottles are finally blown by compressed air into a stream of cold water to cool.

These bottles are already appearing in the shops in novel animal shapes for baby-powder, which is dispensed on a puffer principle, with special atomiser-tops containing a hay-fever cure and with a spray gadget stopper to provide a scent-bottle which is also a squeeze-spray. These flexible bottles are produced by the million in the U.S.A. and have swept the older type container from the cosmetic, patent medicine, and chemical-container market. They show a 75 per cent saving in weight over glass and a 20 per cent saving in space, which are, of course, considerable factors in freight costs. They are unbreakable, can be produced in any shape, size, and colour, are not subject to the corrosive action of acids, and have an attractive appearance, with plenty of sales appeal. Yes, polythene bottles are the coming thing in the container world, and it may well be that we shall soon see polythene milk-bottles, with no chips and breakages and a light load for the foot-slogging roundsman.

IN North Wales, as already mentioned, there is the new and immense plant of the Plastics Division of the Distillers Group, for the development of synthetic resins. Now synthetic resins are used in a rather detached branch of the industry for the production of laminated plastics. These consist of layers of a fibrous material, such as paper, wood, or cloth, impregnated with synthetic resin to form a substance with the appearance of wood and the strength of metal, which can be drilled and machined, has excellent electrical properties, and is resistant to corrosive action.

Laminated plastics are already in use in building constructional work and for scratch and cigarette-burn resisting furniture. Gear-wheels and aircraft propellers are made from this material, which is rapidly becoming the engineers' cure-all. Laminates may, before long, have the answer to the building material bottlenecks in this country. Technicians are working on the problems accompanying the

CUT-PRICE LUXURY

greater use of laminated plastics for building construction and they hope for spectacular results in the near future, when a paper house will have the strength of steel, complete with an entirely new attractive appearance.

THERE is only space to touch on one further aspect of the plastics picture—that of clothing. The very high price of wool has, in effect, put much clothing in the luxury class and beyond the reach of normal pockets. But here synthetic materials are coming to the rescue.

Already a greater proportion of rayon is being used in the making of clothing. Rayon is, of course, a cellulose plastic, and the world production of this material is about 15 per cent of the total cotton and wool production combined. The production of rayon is, however, capable of almost indefinite expansion, whereas wool and cotton cannot be increased for at least three years and, even then, the output is largely dependent on unpredictable natural factors.

To join rayon we shall have terylene as soon as the £10 million plant at present in course of being built by Imperial Chemical Industries is in production. Terylene, which is to be made at Wilton in North Yorkshire, is twice as strong as cotton, is mothproof, light in weight, unshrinkable, and weather

resisting. Raw materials will be drawn from the near-by oil-refining plant, and it is an interesting fact that oil is one of the few basic raw materials in plentiful world supply and one which has not shared in the too familiar price rise.

Further synthetic fibres are being developed, such as 'Orlon'—nearest to wool—by the American octopus Du Pont, 'Ardil' by Imperial Chemical Industries at Dumfries, and 'Perlon' and 'Grillon' in Germany and Switzerland respectively. When the various new factories are completed and synthetic fibres reach the market in quantity, there will be a halt to rising prices and, as mass-production proceeds, the economies it produces should reduce costs and prices whilst giving a product with many advantages for the long-suffering public.

THUS out of masses of technical data and figures there emerges the promise of new materials for all branches of human activity. Materials which are not dependent on climatic gambles but on planned production. The technicians and administrators of the plastics industry are out to reverse post-war economic trends and, in so doing, they are treading the satisfying and exciting path of those who break fresh ground for the benefit of mankind.

Marmalade

*Spare me my breakfast marmalade, I beg;
That inch of bacon, that occasional egg
Deny me, and I'll bear the deprivation,
But marmalade's my whole day's inspiration.
What type do I like best?
Here is the test:
Place the container with the aureate stuff
(The plain glass-jar it jelled in is enough)
Upon a cloth snow-white
Full in the early light.
Does its pale shadow on the linen hold
A gleam of gold—
Gold by the glorious in-gazing sun
From that translucence won
And laid, in his grand, generous mood of morning,
Upon your humble board for its adorning?
From that spilled golden gleam may be assayed
Perfection in my morning marmalade!*

W. K. HOLMES.



A Dinner for My Aunt

NORMAN L. GOODLAND

MY aunt, immaculate in her clean overalls, took up a cloth and bent down to her oven to see how the dinner was progressing. The savoury smell of Jack Hare assailed us anew as she opened the oven-door—and there he lay upon the top shelf, a glorious sight, trussed and stuffed, with a garland of roasting potatoes all round him, all turning a delicate golden-brown; and there, underneath, were the onions in their glass coffin, sticking up above an intriguing sea of sugar and margarine.

'That,' I said to my aunt, 'looks very nice indeed.'

'And so it ought,' she replied crisply, 'considering the price I paid for it!'

I winced at this. 'Well, Aunt,' I said, 'it might not have been all that easy to come by!'

'I hope,' said my aunt sharply, as she regarded me keenly through her spectacles, 'that your friend the dairyman came by it honestly.'

I stroked my nose thoughtfully, but did not reply.

'I wish you'd never gone to lodge with him.' She grumbled. 'I don't like the looks of him. A regular poacher if ever there was one.'

'But he did get you a hare.'

'Yes, but I didn't know where it came from

when you brought it to me. And it wouldn't surprise me a bit if you went out with him yourself to catch it.'

'Auntie!' I exclaimed in shocked tones.

I AM sorry to have to say that my aunt's suspicions were not entirely groundless. A few days earlier, the dairyman and I were walking along Dark Lane just after dawn, to get the herd in. It was October—wet, cold, and uncomfortable, but full of colour. There were colours all along the lane—long knitting-needles of spindle, with orange beads in pink velvet boxes, and yellow-green leaves tipped with brightness, as if they had each been dipped in red ink. There were high ranks of purple-stemmed dogwood; necklaces of fat, red waxed berries draped upon water-colour elders; slivers of rose-hips; the bulbous, bursting blue of privet berries; and tall, dry skeletons of hogweed. All these I noticed and tried to relish for their beauty, in attempt to make up for the dampness seeping uncomfortably through my boots, when Jim suddenly touched me on the arm, and we stood still.

A dim shape was approaching us in the grassy lane, between the high banks, close to the ground. I was then too inexperienced to

A DINNER FOR MY AUNT

know what it was, but I was startled as it suddenly leaped high into the air and landed upon one of the banks. Then it disappeared.

'Jack 'Are,' whispered Jim. 'Come over here.'

I followed him to the bank, and we crept up. Jack Hare was nowhere to be seen. We waited, and suddenly, a long, long way down the hedge, Jack Hare leaped mightily into the field, a leap of four yards or more. His course seemed extraordinarily erratic. Every so often he would turn at a sharp right-angle, leaping as he did so, or he might double back on his track and leap again, and finally he ran up along the marshy end of the pasture. Another leap in the far distance, and he again disappeared.

'Full o' they monkey-tricks, Jack 'Are,' said Jim. 'Breaking his scent. Keeps to the wet so's the fox won't smell him. Off back to his form.'

'Where would it be?' I asked. 'Down there where he disappeared?'

'No,' said Jim. 'Tis under one of they lumps of couch right in the middle of the field there, I daresay. I 'spect he's there now, but you wouldn't see him go to it. Crafty animals they be, and no mistake.'

We trudged on. 'I'd like to get hold of him,' I said.

Jim glanced at me, curiously. 'Not much chance o' that,' he said. 'He's out in the open. You'd have to use a gun. 'Twouldn't do, with Keeper about. Besides, Master wouldn't have that. You might walk him down, but I don't expect so. He'd be away afore you was halfway there—even if you knew which lump he was under.'

'Couldn't he be caught with a wire?'

'Oh aye, he *could*,' said Jim, 'but 'twouldn't do for us to put no wires down. Keeper, he knows Jack 'Are is there, and he knows where he goes through. He knows we comes up for cows, too, just about the time to take him out of a wire. 'Twouldn't do.'

I could see well enough that 'twouldn't do.'

'Still,' went on Jim, 'it do seem a pity to leave him there for the shooters! They don't appreciate things like that—they gets too much on 'em. Me, I'm partial to a bit of Jack 'Are, but missus don't like the blood. Tarrble messy things they be. There's plenty as won't have 'em on that account. Bot, of course,' hinted Jim, stumping stolidly along, and staring straight ahead, 'if anybody knew where to take him, 'twould be different. They ain't

everyone's choice, like, but there's some as might want a little bit added on to the meat ration. 'Specially if they lives on their own!'

I glanced at Jim, wondering what was in his mind, or if, indeed, there was anything in his mind apart from his casual conversation. But he gave no sign. I thought of my aunt living at the end of the village, all on her own. 'I'd know where to place him,' I said.

Jim still plodded along without sign. He often ignored me for long periods at a time. It was his way of reminding me that he did not regard me as a true countryman.

A FEW days later, after the morning milk, Master sent us off up to the swede-ground to trim hedges. We started in a sunlit corner near the sheep-dip. Stinging-nettles flourished still, and tall hogweed skeletons rustled sprays of dried seeds from dead, grey fingers webbed with glistening gossamer. The hazel leaves were curled and discoloured, the oaks turning, and old-man's-beard trailed green over the brambles.

Jim was shewing me how to sharpen the hook. 'Master be gone to market,' he said. 'He always puts us on a job like this when he's gone for the day. He can see what we've done when he comes back, then.' His bluestone flicked expertly about the curved blade. 'There!' he said. 'You see, 'tis bound to come a bit awkward-like at first. Don't hold the stone straight on to the edge, look, or you'll put a shoulder to it. Hooks ain't no more use after they been shouldered. Did you ask your aunt about that 'are?'

'Eh?' I exclaimed, surprised by his sudden change of subject. 'Who said I was going to?'

'I thought perhaps you might. Still, if you ain't, you ain't.'

'Well, I have. She said she'd be pleased to take anything, so long as it was come by honestly!'

'Oh well,' said Jim with a grin, 'we won't upset the old gal's mind by letting her know where it did come from.'

'Do you think we can get it?'

'Tell thee what,' said Jim, 'tis more of a problem than you might think. Keeper's inclined to keep his eye on me a bit these days. You'll see. He'll be up along here afore the day's out, I'll bet ye. The only time we can pick up Jack 'Are is by night.'

'Will he still be there at night?'

'No. Jack 'Are feeds by night, rests by day.

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He never sleeps. He just sits in his form in the daytime and dozes, light as a feather. Slightest sign o' danger, and he's gone. I reckon I knows where he goes at night, though. Come up along here with me.'

I followed Jim up along the untrimmed hedge. It was a sound blackthorn hedge, and there were one or two holes close to the ground where small animals had made a way through. These Jim stuffed solidly with thorn, using the sole of his boot to ram it home.

At one hole, rather larger than the rest, he stopped. He bent down to examine it carefully, and pulled off a few pieces of brown and white fluff from the prickles. 'He do come through here, look,' said Jim. 'See how the grass is all trod down, too? He do come through here to feed o' nights.' Again Jim blocked the hole solidly, and we passed to the next. Jim bent down. 'Ah!' he said. 'I thought as much. Look here!' He shewed me the imprint of a heavy boot in the field verge, and how the sole of the boot had been pressed well down into the earth as if a man had stooped there with his weight well forward. 'You see, Keeper, he do know. He been here, look, and then walked away and left it. 'Pend upon it, he's got summat at the back of his mind. 'Tis a problem, no mistake. 'Twouldn't have done to set a wire, would it?' He stood up, stroking his chin with his fingers. 'He'll see we blocked the holes up, 'pend upon that,' he said thoughtfully. 'I wonder if he's about in the copse yon, watching us.'

'Well what if he is, Jim? We know Jack Hare comes through here, damaging the roots. What more natural than that we should block up his entrance?'

'Ah,' said Jim slowly, 'that's right, too. Though it'd come better from you, like, than it would from me, if he happens along.'

WE blocked the holes all along the hedge dividing the swedes from the pasture, and also those in the two hedges bordering the narrow ends of the field. The long side down by the copse we left. I was not then sure what Jim had in mind, but I thought he might tell me in his own time. Having done this, we went into the middle of the field, and Jim squinted carefully down the rows. 'There!' he said.

I looked in the direction which he pointed out, and saw what I thought to be a white

flint: but when we came up with it I saw how one of the roots had been pared all round above the ground, so that the green plumed curiously from a freshly-white neck. Other roots had been attacked haphazardly, but this particular one had, it seemed, been more to the animal's delicate taste. We found others similarly damaged as we went back to work.

'We'll leave it a day or two,' said Jim. 'Keeper, he'll be suspicious when he sees the holes blocked up, so we mustn't come up here the next night or two. That'll give Jack 'Are time to get used to coming in and out of the gate. 'Pend upon it, Keeper'll be along afore the day's out.'

Sure enough, while we were having our lunch, the keeper emerged from the copse with his gun on his shoulder and came striding across the swede-ground. He walked down the hedge towards us, and it was evident that his keen glance had not missed our activities under the blackthorn. A small, wiry, sharp-featured man he was, with black eyes and an incredibly weather-beaten face. 'What's on then?' he asked.

'Oh, nothing much to-day,' answered Jim amiably. 'Master be gone to market. We'm doing a bit of hedge-trimming.'

The keeper glanced at me, wondering, perhaps, who I was.

'I seen a hare about here lately,' he observed.

'Oh aye, no doubt,' said Jim placidly.

'Daresay there'll be a few about now after the roots, with the bad weather coming in.'

'Ah, I think I might get a shot at him. I see you been blocking up the holes in the hedge then.'

'Oh, I did that,' I said. 'I saw the roots had been nibbled, so I thought it would be the right thing to do.'

'Oh aye,' said the keeper. 'Pity you left the hedge all down by the copse, though. And what will you be putting under the gate?'

'Well,' I said, 'how foolish! I never thought of that.'

'Ah,' said the keeper, fixing me with his black eye, 'others do, though!'

The keeper nodded and went off. Jim sat there, staring innocently across the field, his jaws moving up and down as he ate his bread and cheese. 'Pend upon it,' he said, 'tis a problem!'

FOR some two or three days after this the subject of Jack Hare was not mentioned.

A DINNER FOR MY AUNT

As I worked about the cowpens with Jim, I began to think that he was not, after all, going to do anything further about it. But I was wrong.

Towards the end of one milking, when the evening was beginning to draw in, I noticed that Jim hung over the half-door of the cowpen a little more often than usual. After a while he stuck his thumbs in his braces and strolled outside. He stood watching the smoke from the farmhouse scurrying down towards us, and glanced up at the clouds, with soft, ragged edges, as they hurried over the almost bare walnut-trees. 'I don't think it will rain to-night if the wind keeps up,' he said as he strolled back in. 'I reckon 'tis as right as ever it could be. 'Tis coming through the copse, right across the swede-ground. I 'specs th'old keeper 'll have got tired of waiting up to catch us by now.'

'Perhaps he'll have shot Jack Hare like he said he would.'

'Ah, keeper's talk!' said Jim contemptuously. 'They won't shoot no more'n they'm obliged.'

We finished washing down the cowpens and went home, and I was in a high state of excitement and anticipation. Real poaching! I had heard enough about it, read quite a good deal, and listened enthralled to the poaching yarns in the Bear and Ragged Staff, which, even in my state of ignorance, I could sometimes hardly credit. But old Jim, I recollected, had never contributed to these yarns. Not by any sign or comment had he ever shewn, even when the methods discussed had reached the height of superstition and stupidity, that he knew better.

We had our tea, and Jim said to me: 'Well now, young feller-me-lad, if you 'm wise you'll get along to bed early. You take a tip from me—if you wants poaching and dairywork to go together, 'tis early to bed on a likely night.'

So it was early to bed for me, but the fact that Jim did not come upstairs when I went only added to my excitement. I saw him go out of his back-door to the woodshed, and saw him close the door behind him. Then I saw a dim, yellow flicker of light glowing through the eyelet-hole above the door. I waited for some moments, but Jim remained inside. I guessed that he was looking over his nets, and had sent me off to bed to be sure that I would not discover his hiding-place for them.

I slept fitfully, listening to the noises of the

night, and prayed that the wind would not drop. Finally, I fell asleep.

I was awakened by the hoarse, urgent whisper of old Jim. 'Come on, lad. Half-past one. Don't light no lights, and be quiet. There might be somebody about in the road.'

I dressed, and followed him downstairs. Once outside, I saw by the light of a fitful moon that Jim wore a long, loose-fitting jacket, almost to his knees. 'Where's the gear?' I whispered.

'Don't thee worry over things like that,' said Jim. 'Come on.'

I looked carefully at his jacket, but there seemed to be no sign of the bulk upon him which I thought the nets must shew.

WE made our way quietly through the hedge at the end of the garden and, keeping well into the deep shade of bowing hazels, on up towards the swede-ground. Leaves fluttered and spun past us in the darkness, tapping our faces and hands with the gentlest touch. The herd regarded us with wondering black eyes, but, knowing us, and knowing that it was not milking-time, they did not stir from their warm beds in the lee of the copse. Our shortened moon-shadows danced at our feet over the grass, and it seemed for all the world as if we were picking our way through the moonlit sleeping-chamber of horned giantesses.

'Don't like this moon,' murmured Jim in an undertone. 'Them black spots in the sky is moving up, though. They're clouds yon. I think it'll be all right later on.'

He picked up a couple of heavy flints glinting in the darkness under the hedge, and bade me do the same. 'Now,' he breathed as he made his way into the copse, 'keep close behind me. 'Tain't safe to go the lane way. Keep quiet, and do as you see me do.'

So through the black copse we went, with a million dancing diamonds of light between the criss-crossed shrubs and hazels, along a track more familiar to Jim than to myself, so that it was hard for me to keep up with him. I guessed that we would reach the lane somewhere near the swede-ground.

We got to within twenty yards of the lane, and Jim stepped into the shade of a thorn-bush, which instantly swallowed him up. I did likewise, and his whisper came in my ear: 'Stand in here and wait for me. Don't make no noise.'

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He was gone, I should say, a full quarter of an hour. An owl hooted diamally from the depth of the woods, and some creature I could not see scuttered furtively through the undergrowth behind me. I was just beginning to think that Jim was, after all, going to do the job without me, when he quietly turned up at my side. 'I can't see nobody about,' he muttered. 'We'm all right, I reckon. Come on, but keep below the hedge, like. Jack 'Are got eyes as well as earholes, though he won't hear much with the wind blowing away from him towards us. But you can't take no chances even then. They'm tarrble narvous when the noise of the trees stops 'em hearing properly.'

WE came to the gate, and from the depths of his jacket, like a conjuror, Jim produced skein after skein of netting. 'Got them flints?' he asked under his breath. I gave them to him, and he spread out the net over the gate, using the flints to secure it along the top bar. Expertly he hitched the bottom corners upon a few weak strands of thorn, and tucked the bottom edge of the net towards the gate so that the wind blew through and bellied it out nicely.

'Now listen,' said Jim as we stooped together behind the hedge. 'I'm going to drive the field, because I knows my way about in the dark better 'n you do. If all goes right, Jack 'll make straight for the gate. You might not hear him come, but I 'spect you will. Keep your eyes fixed on the net, and, when it goes down, throw yourself right on top of him. Break his neck quick as you can. You knows how to do it; same as a rabbit when we went ferreting. And for Lord's sake don't make a mess of it, or he'll scream. If he screams, folk 'll hear him from here to t'other side o' Romey.

'Now, if anybody comes, 'pend upon it 't'll be the keeper, so grab my net and run. Don't go crashing through the copse or he'll hear where you be and you'll lose hare and net, and very likely lose yourself too. Woods is tarrble queer places in the dark if you don't know 'em. But if he's got a torch you'll have to dodge into the copse, find a bush and stand inside it, perfectly still. Even if he shines the torch full on ye, keep quite still. Ten to one he won't see nothing so long as you'm still: but if you moves a finger or a hand—he's got you! All right then?'

'Ah,' I said, 'I'll do the best I can.'

'Right,' said Jim. 'I'm off.'

I stooped down in such a position that I could spring upon the net the instant it fell. The wind sang softly in the blackthorn, a dozen sibilant undertones rising and falling, rising and falling, accompanied by the deep bass hush of the tree-tops in the copse. Bushes stood out in the gloom at odd angles down the lane—bushes which bobbed and nodded and assumed queer attitudes, like a row of grotesque beings leaning out from the bank to watch with me, and to wait.

Time passed and, strain my ears as I might, I could hear no other sound than that of the wind. Quite suddenly, and as instinctively as Jack Hare might do out in the field, my heart began to pound, my scalp crawled, and I froze. My senses were supernaturally alert, and I could suddenly see almost as if it were daylight. I had the sickening feeling that someone was standing right behind me!

For some moments I poised thus, and then, very carefully, I looked round. Nothing there. A particularly large bush bobbed at me some few yards away, flopping a dismal disjointed shadow of a limb as if beseeching me to beware. I looked and looked, almost sure that I could distinguish the deeper shadow of someone standing behind it, and it was while I stooped, petrified, that I heard a new sound on the other side of the hedge. Thump, thump, thump . . . thumpity-thump, and then silence. A stone rattled in the swede-ground, and, after an interval, another. Thump, thump, thump.

Jack Hare was being overcautious. And then, with a nearness which set my taut nerves atingle, I heard a stone land, quite close. Away went Jack Hare, and, despite my keyed-up vigilance, before I expected it to happen, the shadow over the gate flicked away and the stars leaped into my vision through the bars. A formless heap was struggling violently upon the ground. For the second, I panicked: I did not know where to catch hold of it! It rolled and struggled away from me, and I did as Jim said. I threw myself upon it, half-sickened by the frantic movements beneath my weight. Clumsily I searched with my hands for the head, and, finding it, I heard Jack Hare drawing his breath. I felt his sides heave. I knew that he must not scream, and punched him quickly with the side of my hand under his poll, just as I would a rabbit, and great was my relief as I felt him go limp. I

still stooped there as I disentangled him, gripping him firmly all the time in case he was foxing me. But I had no need to fear. Poor Jack was as dead as ever he could be.

I heard Jim coming along the lane from the direction of the bush which had waved its weak warning arm towards me. Triumphant, I held my booty high, and turned to greet him. I opened my mouth to speak—but the words froze, for the form advancing upon me with unnerving speed was not Jim, that I could see: it was the thin, spry, gaitered outline of the keeper!

INTO the copse—through the bushes—through the brambles. Crash! crash! crash! Damn and blast these brambles! Damn and blast them, I say!

I wrenched the net from some projection upon which it was entangled, dropping Jack Hare as I did so, and, having got it free, stooped to pick up my booty and grabbed only a painful handful of thorns. I had no time to worry over that, and searched round frantically. Finding the limp, warm body, I gripped it firmly and plunged on. I knew something of the despair Jack Hare must have felt while he was entangled in the meshes, for the deeper I plunged, the more hopeless it became for me to get away.

Suddenly, I stood still to listen. The trees above me bobbed and winked in the wind, but some selective sense had blotted out the noise of the wind in the woods, and I heard the keeper slipping quietly round by the paths he knew, in order to head me off. Too late I remembered Jim's words: 'Don't go crashing through the woods.'

What a fool I was! Then I remembered more of his advice: 'Keep quite still.' This I did. The keeper's footfalls ceased in darkness ahead of me, and I had a very nasty feeling that he might be staring me full in the face there, because my back was towards the dim light which filtered in from the lane. But I continued to be motionless, and was rewarded by the sound of the keeper's footfalls hurrying softly away, pausing uncertainly, then returning, but not quite in front of me this time.

Still I did not move. The splinters in my hands and some in my ankles began to smart painfully, but I kept perfectly still. All at once, a white beam flickered through the woods, and the tree-trunks leaned in towards it like ghosts. Moths crossed and recrossed

it with diagonal flashes of silver, and the branches above disappeared into a vault of blackness. The beam flicked over the tree-trunks, and then began to probe slowly, slowly, one by one, the bramble-bushes. Slowly, slowly it crept towards my bush, and how to stand there I did not know. Yet I did so, and kept absolutely still.

The beam came yet nearer towards me, and now seemed to be shining straight over my shoulder. All about me I saw in silhouette the stems of wild-rose etched against pure white light—the pointed, turgid fruits, the hard thorns sticking up like black triangles. And then I was staring directly down the beam, so that I could see nothing but the pin-point of light, the all-too-sparse shadow of rose-stems thrown upon my lapels, the hand gripping Jack Hare in a clear space devoid of all cover. Again Jim's words came to me: 'Even if the torch shines full on ye, keep still. Ten to one he won't see nothing so long as you're still: but if you moves a finger or hand—he got ye!'

How long the beam was upon me I do not know. Probably for only a second or so, but it seemed then a full quarter of an hour. And then it passed slowly on. . . . 'Keep still, keep still! He hasn't seen you!'

Suddenly the beam snapped out. 'All right,' said the keeper. 'I seen you was standing in the bushes there, and I knows who you be. Now I'll give ye your chance to come out on it quiet and peaceable like, but if you don't. . . .'

I heard an ominous click in the darkness. 'Are ye coming out, or shall I gie thee a dusting wi' shot?'

'Keep still, keep still!'

'Damn ye, will ye come out now?'

'Ha!' I thought. 'Losing his temper! He couldn't really know then where I am.' I was not really frightened, but if by some unlucky chance . . . I waited, longing to duck, but the keeper would have heard the movement at once. . . .

'Right,' he said. 'Here it comes then!'

Crash! crash! . . . Crash! crash! echoed the woods, and far away along the hills, Crash! . . . crash! But no shot had come in my direction. It sang harmlessly into the darkness and pattered into the undergrowth like so much rain. At the same time I heard a heavy body smashing through the bushes further inside the copse, and the keeper was away after it. . . .

DINNER over at my aunt's, I waited a respectable time, chatted about this and that, and then suggested that I ought to call at the Bear and Ragged Staff.

'All right,' said my aunt. 'You'd better take him his money. But you just tell him that I don't hold with this poaching business. It's thoroughly dishonest.'

'Oh come, Aunt!' I said. 'How do you know that he poached it?'

'He doesn't rear them in his own back-garden, does he?' she asked, as she rummaged in her purse. I thanked her for the money, bade her good-bye and to look after herself, and went.

I found Jim in his usual corner, and quietly, when no one was looking our way, pushed the money over to him across the table. He ran his eye over it, counted it out with his stubby forefinger, and pushed half back to me. I bought the drinks and sat down with him.

Just then Keeper came in. His black eye

glanced upon us for a fleeting instant, but he did not speak. He walked up to the bar, and we studied his back. He talked to his neighbour there, we thought, with a little more formality than usual, and, although it is difficult to tell a man's disposition from behind, old Jim leaned towards me and opined quietly: 'Pend upon it, Keeper got his prickles up. You know what, lad, there was more than one hare in that 'ere swede-ground. Did your aunt mention anything about wanting any more?'

'No,' I replied. 'She grumbled all the time about the one she did have!'

'Ah,' said Jim with a wink, 'but did she eat un?'

'Oh yes, she ate it all right.'

'Well, if she'll eat one, I daresay she'll eat another, you.' We again eyed the formidable back of the keeper. 'But 't'll be a problem, lad, 't'll be a problem!' Jim drank deeply of his pint, and winked. 'Pend upon it,' he said, 'it *will* be a problem!'

Sugar-Beet

G. A. SQUIRES

AS I go about my work, in and around the buildings, this morning I can hear a rhythmical chop-chopping sound which comes from the next field. I look through a gap in my hedge and see that my neighbour's sons are hard at it, topping sugar-beet. I stand and watch them for a minute or two. With sacking aprons tied around their waists—for the green tops are still wet after the overnight rain—the boys work slowly down the long rows of beet, which are laid out in alleyways ready for topping. With a speed that comes only after long practice, each root is speared near its crown with the point of the hook, lifted, and grasped by the left hand; the hook is then raised and brought down

again swiftly, and—chop, the leafy top falls to the ground, and in the same instant the boy flings the root with unerring aim on to one of the heaps between the rows, without even raising his eyes from the row he is working on. The several motions seem to be performed almost simultaneously, and almost more quickly than the eye of the onlooker can follow them.

I used rather to fancy myself at this job, for one of my few assets in this life is a comparative immunity from backache, and if one is to achieve maximum speed it is necessary to settle into a clock-work rhythm, which entails a fixed crouch, with no letting up. It is dangerous to tire at this pace, for the slightest

relaxation might mean a faulty stroke and a chunk out of one's finger. I still bear the scar which resulted from one such weary swipe at the end of a long day.

It is pleasant work on a crisp dry day from late September or early October to December, but I have many a time trudged home soaked to the skin, and with about four pounds of Norfolk mud clinging to my rubber boots, for the work must go on, wet or fine, if a load is due at the factory on one of the permits which are issued for specified dates throughout the season.

I HAVE not myself grown any sugar-beet for the past three years, for it is a crop which takes a lot out of the soil, and my land is hungry stuff—it needs plenty of organic matter if it is to yield well; and years of frequent cropping with beet have depleted it considerably. As an instance of the extractive nature of this crop, as much as two tons of soil an acre—good topsoil, full of humus—is often carted off the land with the harvested roots, for the heavy Norfolk loam clings stubbornly to them in a wet time, and no amount of knocking can dislodge it; it is borne away to the factory, there to be washed off and carried down the drains to the river, and thence to the sea. It is thus lost to the land for ever. Soil erosion takes many forms nowadays.

It will be seen that the 1½ to 2 tons of sugar which an acre will yield on an average, about ten tons of beet with a 15½ per cent sugar content, is only gained at a price, a pretty stiff price in these days of world-wide soil depletion. And there are other harmful results of overcropping, for if this root is grown in too close rotation it becomes a prey to various pests and diseases, notably to infestation with the virus of sugar-beet yellows and with eelworm, the incidence of which last has drastically reduced yields in some parts of the country. As an insurance against these troubles, the Ministry of Agriculture now prohibits the growing of sugar-beet on the same piece of land more often than once in every three years, quite rightly to my way of thinking.

For these various reasons I have been resting my own land from sugar-beet, and we are concentrating on stock-keeping to replenish soil which I had to cane rather mercilessly during the war years. But lately, whenever I

glance at my mounting muck-heaps, I say to myself: 'Next year—perhaps.' It will be quite like old times, and I think I can safely look forward to some good crops again, for sugar-beet is one of the most paying cash crops one can grow these days, if the land is well cultivated.

It is certainly a very popular crop with the smallholders in my district. I do not know of one among the smallholding community to which I belong who does not grow sugar-beet. Even the very small, 7 to 15 acre men grow an acre or two every year; they are all highly skilled at the work and take great pains at all stages of the crop's cultivation. Yields of up to 18 tons an acre are quite common locally. And, of course, it is one of the chief money-spinners on the large farms also.

In fact, from September or October to Christmas, Norfolk seems to be almost swamped under a rising tide of the grimy roots. The land everywhere is dotted with little cairns of beet, heaped ready for carting. Small mountains of beet accumulate on the roadsides, awaiting transport to the local sugar-factory. The byroads are alive with tractors towing their piled trailers to the station-sidings, a constant stream of lorries with their netted freights travel the main roads which lead to the factory, and long train-loads may be seen chugging slowly across the marshes to the same destination. Even the rivers are unusually busy with the traffic of the motor-driven wherries that glide along them, with their hulls well down, carrying their cargoes of beet to the factory wharves.

DURING the season the local sugar-beet factory swallows up every man jack of the casual labourers in the district. To them this four or five months' work at the factory is known as 'The Campaign.' It is their wage-harvest, and there is much speculation among them as to how long the season will last. In a good year it may extend from September to February. A long 'Campaign' means a tidy sum of money to many a labouring man hereabouts.

It has always seemed incredible to me that a man of the fields can stick this factory-work, with its shift hours and periodic night-work. For it takes some sticking. I have known a particular crony of mine, a normally russet-checked farm-labourer, to look absolutely grey with fatigue after several months there—

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which has included many twenty-four-hour shifts. Yet he goes stoically through with it every year, for the money he saves sets him up for the rest of the year, when his earnings are much less.

Modern agriculture can be responsible for some rather hideous blots on the rural landscape. That Moloch of a factory sprawling over the face of the land in East Anglia is one of them. I once worked there myself for a short time, as one of the farmers' representatives. The interior of the factory, with its fantastic network of conduit-pipes, made one think of the bowels of some fabulous prehistoric monster. The din was terrific and incessant, and the heat would have made an Arab sweat. I was thankful that my work kept me mostly in the factory yard. Even there the environment was hardly attractive. Smoke belched in furious black clouds from the chimneys, and the stench of the effluent on the marshes was enough to make the hardiest man vomit.

Often, however, my work would take me to the riverside where the barges unloaded. There, the high wall of one of the 'flumes'—the huge compounds into which the beet was crane-hoisted—shut out most of the noise and smell, and the prospect over the river was in astonishing contrast to the scene behind me. I must confess that I was highly disposed to linger there after my job among the barges was done! It was my sole compensation to stand on the wharf and gaze at the ever-

changing pattern of the autumn skies as they rolled over the brow of the upland and across the vast windy expanse of the marshes with their 'thousand beeves at pasture'; to watch the herons majestically sailing and the hawks hovering there; and to follow with my eyes the swiftly-moving beams of light as the cloud-harried sun periodically laid its long primrose paths across the green plain. Once, in the evening time, I witnessed the unforgettable sight of a great sweep of starlings, perhaps a hundred thousand strong, wheeling and planing—with a susurrous sound of their many wings that made one think of the authentic host of heaven—before they finally sank to roost for the night in a reed-bed about half-a-mile down the river.

By comparison with the factory my little holding seemed a paradisaical place, and how thankfully I returned to it! However, it did make me realise something of the price we have to pay for so many of the things we deem indispensable to our modern life. After that experience, I almost decided to grow no more sugar-beet. But, alas, my tooth is as sweet as the next man's, and, of course, the crop has kept my holding going more than once. In fact, I don't think it is any exaggeration to say that our local farming would go completely bankrupt without it. It was sugar-beet that saved Norfolk agriculture from complete collapse in the 'twenties, as it may do again in the 'sixties. And so: 'Next year—perhaps.'

Song of Silence

*Upwards through the pines led the rocky path
To unhindered view of high mountain-peaks
Shining in brilliance of fresh-fallen snows,
Near, yet in their grandeur far, remote,
The beauty of their forms, with faint shadows
That merged into the misty clouds, shewed strong
Against the blue infinity of sky.*

*Voices were hushed in that clear alpine air,
And words were spoken in a quiet tone,
Not to disturb the stillness all around—
Stillness that deepened with approach of night
Into silence, a silence so profound
That held the stars above the moonlit peaks
And folded in its depths a wordless song.*

ELIZABETH COLLINGWOOD.

Twice-Told Tales

XXII.—The Slaver

[From Chambers's *Edinburgh Journal* of October 1852]

HAVING arrived alongside, our captain boarded the vessel in his gig. He was received politely, and without embarrassment, by the Yankee, who immediately offered refreshments, which were declined. Not a slave was to be seen, nor did there exist any smell, so universal a concomitant to indicate their presence. Some forty Brazilians, each with a cigar in his mouth, were loitering round the clean decks, while the crew were busy at the pumps, creating the greatest possible noise, assisted by a flock of parrots and love-birds, perched in every direction.

Once more the ship's papers were produced, and carefully scanned. These proceedings occupied a considerable time—a matter of preconcerted importance, as the suspicion was entertained that slaves were concealed below, and that soon the danger of impending suffocation would reveal the fact. Our chief took up a position near the main hatchway, and listened anxiously for the slightest indication. Various manoeuvres were tried to get him away without success. The Brazilians were beginning to appear impatient; and on board the *Rattler*, whence, by telescopes, the proceedings were watched with deepest interest, the hopes of even the most sanguine were becoming faint, when Captain Cumming was observed to start, and point to the deck. He had heard the stifled sound of intolerable agony rise from below his feet, like a peal of distant thunder. The slaves were suffocating from want of air, and their dread of their jailers was extinguished in the immediate struggle for life.

In a moment, the American perceived that the game he had been so skilfully playing was lost, and his assumed coolness deserted him. In a voice choked with emotion, he rapidly uttered: 'She is a Brazilian. I am not the captain; this is,' pointing to a tawny Portuguese at his elbow.

'Haul down the flag, and hoist her proper colours.'

Down came that ensign, polluted by the traffic it protected, amid the cheers of our men, which made the welkin ring.

'Don't let the poor devils die,' cried the stout American mate, actuated by the generosity of the race he sprang from, which his degrading employment could not wholly stifle. Assisted by our men, who had jumped out of the boat, the hatches were soon removed, exposing to view a mass of human misery which, being once seen, must remain impressed on the memory for ever—the naked bodies of men, women, and children, writhing in a heap, contorted, gasping for air, sinking from exhaustion, and covered with sweat and foam. The darkness which surrounded them only deepened the shades, without concealing a single feature; whilst the dense and sickening steam which curled heavily up from the reeking mass, made it a picture too horrible to contemplate, and one the minute details of which must be left to haunt the memory of those who were unfortunate enough to witness it.

First one and then another endeavoured to ascend, but with a strength unequal to the task, they fell back into the mephitic abyss. Our men rushed forward to their aid, and catching hold of their imploring hands, placed them upon deck. There, prostrate and indiscriminately huddled together, they gradually recovered from the effects of that terrible confinement, where 547 human beings were, without a breath of fresh air, kept for above two hours crushed together in a space only about three feet in height, and with a superficial extent not equal to that of their bodies, unless in a sitting position! The ordeal proved too much for the vital energy of above twenty, who perished one by one during the next fortnight or three weeks, without having felt the blessing of freedom.



Mad Dogs and Irishmen

JOHN McDONNELL

IT was my father told me this tale, and, as usual with his stories, I'll leave it to you to judge how much salt you'll be needing with it.

It was when, as he said, he was after setting up as a gentleman-farmer in a lap of the hills Wexford way. He'd just married my mother, who was country-bred and pining for the open—though indeed, father added, there was more gentleman than farmer about the open for him; such a scrag-patch of arable you never saw, and his few stringy cattle wandered the glen like lost souls. Still, father and mother were content enough, and keeping themselves in milk and eggs, with an occasional snipe or rabbit when father cleaned his gun and took the dogs out.

He had two dogs then, a young setter called Mick, and Flossie, a liver-and-white cocker, very old, very wise, and very gentle, who later had the care of me while my mother was abed with my sister. That's what my father said, anyway, though maybe his memory was growing a thought crooked. But wait now till you've heard the tale.

IT all happened the day of the local point-to-point—and you know what that means

to farmers anywhere. My father and mother were up betimes setting the place to rights before going off to see it—or at least my mother was churning in the dairy, and my father was standing by the door of the stable, 'letting the day soak into him,' as he put it, when he heard such a yelping and howling as you'd never believe. And then, from nowhere, came Mick and a strange cur rolling and screaming in the muck, and Flossie tearing round in circles yelling her old head off.

'Begod,' says my father, 'it's the rabies!' And it was, sure enough. He took a single leap backwards into the stable, slamming the door shut as he flew, and shouted to my mother through the cracks in the wall to lock herself in.

Then he set to figuring out what to do. His gun was in the house, and anyway (I should have said that the Troubles were begun, when firearms should have been handed in on pain of death) he daren't use it, for there were Black-and-Tans quartered in the village not half-a-mile below. And yet somehow he had to get to that point-to-point. He was part owner, with a certain Tim Sheean, of a lanky bay called Bridie's Folly, and if the favourite, Major Dwyer's mare Curmudgeon,

MAD DOGS AND IRISHMEN

was to cost the shirt off him, at least he must be there to see the deed.

Now, in this stable there were no homes, only an old De Dion chassis fitted up as an open truck with a closed-in cab, in which my father intended parading to the meeting, and it occurred to him that, once the two of them were inside that, all the rabid curs in the world could go for them, and no harm done. So, unbolting the stable-door again, he started up the truck, butted the door open with the bonnet, and roared round the yard to the dairy, where my mother was awaiting him in no very carefree mind. He did his best to over-run the dogs, who were still fighting and creating, but they scattered and came after him, snapping and moaning at his wheels.

It would need all my father's hand-play and eyebrows to tell you how he got my mother safely out of the dairy. He tried sidling the truck up so close to the door that the dogs couldn't get round, but then they simply squirmed underneath the truck and were scratting at the dairy door as soon as he was. Eventually he had to drag my mother bodily through the two windows of the dairy and the cab, which were luckily more or less of a height. A week later she was still picking out splinters which had once been part of the dairy window-ledge.

So they set off, stopping by the way to tell the Black-and-Tans they'd find some sedition being practised back up the hill. 'Just their mark, it was,' said my father.

THEY were nearing the course when my mother, who had been quiet for some time, occupied with her splinters, said: 'Michael, can you hear what I hear?'

'And what's that?' inquired my father above the clatter of the engine.

'I'm thinking it's some live thing in the back of the truck.'

'Begod so it is!' said my father, after peering through the rear window. 'It's Flossie, and she's still whipping round in circles in the back there, as mad as the rest. What'll we do?'

'We'll have to watch from the hill-top,' said my mother, who was no less keen to see the race, 'and then maybe, if we stay close in the cab, she'll leave us be and go off about her business.' So they broke off the road and went bounding up the hill over bog and bracken.

Now, whether it was this jolting or what, they didn't know, but by the time my father had stalled the engine at the brow of the hill overlooking the course Flossie was no longer to be seen.

Here I knew my father was come to the crux of his tale, for he wagged his finger at me and said: 'Believe me or believe me not, me boy, we were so took with the riding that before they were fairly started we were out of that cab and climbing into the back, and shouting fit to start the rain from the clouds. And, when it was all over, and Major Dwyer's Curmudgeon had fallen three hedges from home, what do you think? I found meself like a statue in the back of the truck there, one arm round your mother's waist, and the other round Flossie's neck. She'd been standing on the roof of the cab all the race, as tense and as taken with it as we were, grinning and panting and twitching the merest tip of her tail. "Mary," I says, "will ye look what I've got hold of!"

"Oh, Michael!" she shrieks.

"It's all right," says I. "She's as sane as you are. There's never a sound bitch in all Ireland as wouldn't stop what she was doing for to watch the horses."

Monday's Voyage

*Galleons ride a deep green sea,
Billowing sails, and a west wind free,
Tall masts quiver, strain, and creak
As the rollicking zephyrs reach their peak.
Just lines of washing? I don't agree—
Galleons riding a deep green sea.
Just props, and a field, and clothes to dry?
You are very short-sighted, friend, say I!*

ANTHONY BEVERLEY.



Trade Wind and Blue Water

Trochus-Diving on the Great Barrier Reef

TREVOR FINCH

FLOWERS turned to stone! Not all the botany of books can give Latin tags to the living rocks of Australia's Great Barrier Reef. For 1250 miles, from the estuary of the mighty Fly River, main artery of the New Guinea swamps, then down the Queensland coast, runs a chain of atolls, at high-water the only evidence of the submerged reef. But, when the tide falls, the foam-washed ledge stands out, amon with breakers that have traversed the Pacific unchecked.

Outside this wall the ocean-floor drops sheer 6000 feet. No man knows what creatures live at the foot of these vast cliffs, what dark caves there are in the very foundations of the continent. A fishing skipper paid out 200 fathoms of line, the free end tied to the stout samson-post of his boat. The line tightened and began to stretch, and when he tried to lift it he felt nothing but a dead weight that was sinking down, stretching the cord until it snapped. Perhaps he was lucky to have lost that fish!

The Reef itself consists of a maze of coral outcrops intersected by deeper channels, and the work of charting, recorded as begun in 1770 by Cook, is still far from completion. But the old Spanish mariners knew these

shoals; rather, they knew enough to steer away from them, clawing to seaward in their unwieldy galleons. And if the south-east trade made another point of easting they could not beat against it, but must gamble on one of the treacherous blue-water channels. Golden coins in the sand testify of those who failed.

It was here that the officers of Cook's *Endeavour* plotted the position of a shipwreck which never occurred. The *Endeavour*, after feeling her way for over 1000 miles without once having a leadsman out of the chains, had finally escaped into the open sea. Here, however, the danger was more acute, for the wind thrust her back until she was almost on top of the Reef. With no bottom to hold an anchor, and insufficient boats to carry the crew to a barren, unexplored shore, disaster seemed inevitable.

Then an opening in the breakers appeared, and the ship ran towards it. It was narrow and dangerous—a forlorn hope. The deck-officers saw the eruption of breakers, the ominous calm of the shallow passage, so they took a shot of the sun, added a cross to the chart, and waited for the crash.

It never came. A wave lifted the little ship,

TRADE WIND AND BLUE WATER

the coral sucked at the keel, and they were over. The duty officer erased the cross and substituted: 'Cook's Providential Channel.' So the charts are made.

ALONG the Reef work the trochus-divers. Black and white alike, we drop over the sides of our boats to swim down to the coral-floor in search of the conical shells, destined to become mother-of-pearl. It is a hazardous calling, but the beauty of the underwater scene is irresistible, a challenge to all those who wish to leave the beaten track.

On the weather fringes of the Reef, where the shellfish feed, the breakers may be crashing in a smother of foam, but, underneath, all is as tranquil as an Eastern garden. With diving-glasses strapped over our faces we swim along, peering down at the ever-changing floral pattern. From the surface the sea-bed appeared flat, but this is a new world. Tier upon tier of delicate mosaic; fragile lace in pinks, and mauves, and shimmering greens; horny clusters of staghorn and brain coral—the whole a rioting symphony of colour.

We dispense with gravity when we enter this enchanted land. Our bodies are unfettered by weight, and the mere touch of a toe will lift us over the greatest obstacle. There is immense satisfaction in executing seemingly prodigious feats, hurdling yawning gulfs and beetling cliffs with ridiculous ease. The water, pressing against our face-glasses, tends to magnify every detail; and this, coupled with the dragging slowness of motion, makes it easy to believe that one is leaping across the Grand Canyon or tripping from peak to peak of the Alps. It feels fine to dance a titanic ballet, but we have work to do.

Here is a deep chasm sloping outwards into darkness forty yards away, hundreds of fish flirting over the sandy floor or hanging motionless in the still water. Down we go, for the trochuses will be feeding in the niches of the canyon walls. Tiny fish are everywhere. Ignoring us, they flit like butterflies among the coral caves. We skim along the sides, thrusting arms into crevices so that the trochuses will grip on to our fingers and so be carried.

A brief spell up for air, and we drop down again to investigate the submerged island of staghorn coral, an almost inevitable feature of these canyons. The camouflaged trochus is very like the tip of a staghorn, so we hold

on to the 'antlers' as we crawl up and over the great mass.

ONE day I was on just such an excursion when two tiny banded fish moved up and hovered by my ear. Can you imagine anyone breaking into a cold-sweat underwater? Well, that is what I did. The hair crept up my neck and my whole body suddenly felt cold, for those inch-long black-and-yellow mites were pilot-fish, so named because they appear to guide the sharks, travelling no more than a yard from the brutal snout. Now they were poised beside my face, and I had no need to guess what was behind me.

If it was a tiger-shark, or even an Indian death, I knew that I still had a chance. But as I turned I dreaded seeing the ugly hammer-head. It was a tiger. Relaxing my grip on the coral, I tucked up my legs and drifted for the surface. Four dragging fathoms and my head came clear to shout: 'Shark! Dinghy!' and I ducked again to watch that streamlined killer. If it moved, I would be forced to the bottom again, for that is the only way to evade a tiger; he cannot rush when one is wedged against a coral wall. However, this one considered the problem too long, and as the dinghy came slapping up I scrambled aboard. That was my last dive for the day.

I know of only one diver who escaped from the charge of a hammerhead-shark. Unlike the tiger, which generally circles its prey before the attack, the hammerhead never turns aside. This man, a Darnley Islander, was lucky enough to have a handful of shells which he dropped into the gaping mouth. He fled while the shark was spitting them out.

Another Torres Strait man, named Treacle, actually had his head and shoulders inside the mouth of a tiger-shark, yet he escaped by gouging its eyes with his thumbs. Hundreds of stitch-marks now make him a tourist attraction.

But these hair-raising moments are rare. It is our general routine which enslaves us to the life.

YOUNG WITTI comes up shouting: 'Ay! Ay!', and we all turn to look. Wittl gets excited over everything. Now he shakes the water from his fuzzy hair and grins widely. 'Crayfish,' he says. Everyone dives down to watch, for Wittl is an artist with the spear.

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The cray, with only his feelers protruding, is under a slab of dead coral, and Wittl releases his breath as he sinks to lie on the bottom, spear poised. A flick of the wrist and the shaft grates through the horny shell. Wittl begins to laugh, belches a few bubbles, and streaks for the surface. The rest of us go back to work.

We continue in line, with the dinghy patrolling behind. The inside position, with its shallower water, is the most favoured; the outer posts, more open to shark attack, are filled by myself and my white mate. The islanders have a comforting belief that flesh which is covered with white skin is not as palatable as that encased in black. Swank or not, they plump for the inside running.

'Ay! Ay!' shouts Wittl again. This time he has found a giant clam, a regular granddaddy, and he beckons us down to marvel at it. It looks an evil thing, with its green and blue lips sprawling from the huge, fluted shell. We whites, having read the fictionists' stories of trapped divers, cannot suppress a shudder. Wittl gives the lie direct to all such tales by punching it in the belly, driving his arm up to the elbow into the fleshy centre. The creature begins to close slowly, but Wittl has withdrawn his arm and is again bubbling with mirth.

Nasai, our big, silent islander, gets his fun wrestling with turtles. 'What he weigh?' he asks, indicating the great dome resting on the sand.

'Four hundred pounds,' I hazard, allowing for the magnification of my glass.

Nasai grins. 'I handle him like a baby,' he says, and sinks without a ripple. But there are ripples enough when he brings it up. It jerks from rest and is away to a racing start, skidding and twisting to evade the clinging jockey. Nasai leans back on the carapace, guiding the amphibian to the surface. Forced up, travelling in great lunging dives, with the spray high in the air—whether Nasai is riding the turtle or the turtle drowning Nasai it is

impossible to see. With Nasai once on its back, however, the creature is helpless, and after a playful thump the victor releases it. 'Now,' he says, 'you know who the boss around here.'

At night, since our boat is small, we often shelter in lee of an island. A turtle will provide us with steak and eggs; then come grilled fish and a crayfish apiece. We live well on the Reef.

AS we roll back to port, our waterline sunk with the weight of shell, there is a hiss as a dugong surfaces. Wittl is up to the cross-trees in a flash, while Nasai fits the detachable head to the shaft of the heavy spear. 'Ay! Ay!' calls Wittl. 'Faster! Up he come!'

I haul on the mainsheet and the sail comes flat and hard as the boat leaps to the wind. Nasai is tensed, the coiled line from the spear-head at his feet. Suddenly his hand sweeps down in a cutting motion, and I let the sheet go out with a run. Nasai jumps, all his weight on the spear as he drops on to the back of the rising mammal, and Wittl plummets to the deck to seize the racing line.

Sometimes a dugong, heavy as a steer, will fight like a harpooned whale. But now the steel has driven down through the heart, and we rig the tackle and drag it on to the after-decking. All dugong go to the boys, and they are soon butchering it, happy with the thought of an extra two weeks' wages from the sale.

Anchoring opposite the shell depot, I row ashore and start up to the Harbour Office to report that I am landing shell. As I walk up the grassy track I look back to where the *Tern* rides, trim and neat among the larger luggers. The boys are piling bagged shell on deck, shouting question and answer to friends on neighbouring boats. Their words, musical with the soft native vowels, are one with the lazy, tropical scene. The trade wind is cool on my face, and the sea very blue and clear. This is the life.

The Choice

*I chose the maid who first loved me,
Though there were others fairer far:
Who lonely are in life's dark house
They need a candle not a star.*

FRED COGSWELL.



The Journey

JOHN GRISDALE

THE two women got to the station at ten o'clock, an hour before the train was due to leave. The old lady was travelling, the daughter seeing her off.

They came in a taxi, because it only cost a shilling for the short journey and the old lady always had so many cases and parcels and odds and ends that the extra convenience over the bus was worth the extravagance.

A porter came and took the two cases, and the daughter picked up the carrier and the hat-box and the folded rug and the winter coat, and set off slowly after him. Her mother, with handbag and umbrella, was already in the tiny queue straggling raggedly back from the closed barrier which guarded platform 8. The daughter walked towards the queue, visited with a sudden foretaste of her coming aloneness, savouring it guiltily in the seconds it took her to cover the few yards. It came into her mind trailing mocking replicas of itself from each previous year, taunting her self-criticism.

The journey was annual, every detail following an unvarying pattern. Each of the twenty and more years since her younger sister Alice had married and gone to Hammersmith Mother had gone to stay with her in May or June for three or four weeks. Even during

the war, though it had been to Trowbridge then—from a different platform at a different time, but otherwise the same here, from her end.

Each year the pattern was the same. Christmas over, Mother began to talk about the visit, plan it, write to Alice about it. Easter and it was all settled—seats for shows booked, outings planned, trips to this and that relation of Fred's all fitted into a full timetable. The last few weeks before The Day were a mounting orgy of washing, ironing, pressing, cleaning, and, at last, packing; the last few days an incoherent mass of indecisions and nerves; the last few hours a bubble of unsupportable excitement.

It always wore her out. She had never had her mother's abounding energy and health—Alice had that. The annual months'-long crescendo, on top of her job and the housework and her normal physical insufficiency, reduced her every time to a pitiful rawness which craved only solitude. Each year she could remember clearly, at some appropriate time within the last hours or so of her mother's departure, this same treacherous glimpse of the coming aloneness, instantly and guiltily suppressed. It was always the same.

She came up to her mother. The porter

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had put the cases down and was waiting. She thanked him firmly and emptily, and he slouched away. She piled the coat and rug on the hat-box. 'There's no need to stand here for an hour.' She looked back and up at the big clock, as if to verify the time, though she knew it to the minute. 'It's silly. You know they never let us through until twenty-to. There's always plenty of seats.'

The train was there, stretched alongside the gentle curve of the platform to the smoking mouth of the station. The small engine which had brought it simmered against the buffers, bottled between the carriages behind and the bookstall in front. Above its chimney the hot air shivered, and, seen through it, the blackened girders of the roof twisted and trembled fantastically.

The daughter closed her eyes as she stood lumpily in the queue, her hands clasped in front of her and still holding the paper carrier. She had a headache and she felt sick. It was always the same. They always got here too soon, she always had a headache, her mother would always stand unnecessarily in the queue.

SHE opened her eyes, saw her mother was looking abstractedly towards the bookstall, smiling at some thought, some anticipation. How she looked forward to these holidays! Alice and Fred were comfortably off, had been for years. They fussed her, treated her royally, and, of course, they lived in London, with theatres and West End and glamour a mere bus or tube ride from home.

Not that she and her mother were poor, but they had to be careful. She was not in the least envious, nor jealous. The old house in Peterborough Street suited her very well, even though the neighbours were changing gradually for the worse. Her roots were there, and in her steady job at Carvers, and in the hundred precious familiarities of this home town. She wanted nothing more. Alice and she were different, hardly sisters any longer.

She watched unwatched the sparkle in her mother's eye, the flush on her yellowing face, the excited twitching of her small spare body. Even the mother she knew was not Alice's. Alice had the holiday-mother, the three-or-four-weeks-in-the-year-mother, the mother whose financial, physical, and emotional burden was shared with a husband and a maid and a daily woman.

Her mother turned, smiled, gave an excited shuffle, and glanced up at the big clock. 'It's twenty-past, Marty.'

Martha smiled back, suddenly suffused with a mixture of pride and shame—pride in this erect little mother of hers, who at seventy-four was agile and alert, bird-eyed, and no deafer than she wanted to be; shame for her own guilty relief at her mother's going, for her tired mind's criticisms. She was overtired, of course. It was always that, each year—the cumulative weeks of preparation and packing, and especially the extra-early rising this last morning to have time for the vital good breakfast before the journey, and for the cutting of packets of sandwiches, and for the hundred and one last-minute jobs no planning or experience could eradicate.

She was too tired. As soon as her mother's train was gone at eleven she had to rush to Carvers. Thursday was wage-sheet day and always a tight fit, and she would be two hours late all through. She would have to stay till she was finished, but if she cut out her dinner-hour she might be home by seven. Then there was her mother's room to clear up, and all the usual morning jobs she had had to leave for once.

Here tiredness weighed her down like lead. It was only because of the headache and her tiredness that the thin wedge of relief at her mother's going had edged into her mind. She was not really relieved. She did not want her to go at all.

The shame for her treachery brought a familiar streak of superstitious fear. She stared hard at a crack in a flagstone and prayed with childish intentness and simplicity for her mother's safety on the journey and in all the strange hazards of London. The repetitive invocation wore itself out, and her attention wandered hungrily to the seats against the booking-office wall. She would have gone and sat down had she not now been tied to her mother by the temporary chains of this superstitious affection. She could not now leave her even by a yard, even for a second, and her mother would never forsake the queue. There were by now several people behind them. She shifted her position a little, moved the bulk of her weight from one leg to the other. Panic gripped her invisibly. Could she possibly stand here another second?

She twisted round to look up and back at the big hanging clock. Half-past ten. It always took her half-an-hour to get to this

THE JOURNEY

point. That odd thought intruding made her smile, cleared her mind and gave her a grip on herself.

She spoke to her mother with a new warmth. 'It's getting on.' She jerked her head backwards towards the clock. Her mother nodded, but abstractedly, already in London with Alice and Fred.

MARTHA had no jealousy of her mother's obvious joy at going, as she had no envy of Alice's greater prosperity. Mother would come home happily enough in a month's time, full of it all. She always came home readily enough. There had never been any suggestion on any side—her mother's, Alice's, her own—that Mother should live with them, wholly or in part. It was accepted that Mother lived at 'home,' which was still, as it had always been, the grim, dirtying house in Peterborough Street. It was accepted that Martha looked after her as she had always done. There was neither martyrdom nor sacrifice in doing so. Alice had married, Fred lived in London, therefore Alice left home. That her doing so had left Martha the sole responsibility for a mother chronically dependent, not physically but by disposition, altered nothing. Mother had always been there, and Martha had always been the one at home, Alice the one in demand—even in their teens. That Alice would marry and go away had been part of the structure of their three lives since boys first walked her home from school. And inevitably, since no one ever wanted Martha, it was plain she would go on living with Mother, working at Carvers, looking after both completely and devotedly.

She looked up at the sky, patchily bright or dull beyond the missing or dirty panes of the station-roof's immense arch, and the ache in her was neither headache nor tiredness, but something the invisible stars would have understood. The reasons for this and that were not necessarily within the compass of forty-nine years, nor to be denied therefore.

'Marty, he's come.'

The ticket-inspector was opening the barrier. Martha thrust the carrier into her mother's hand, threw the coat and rug over one arm, and lifted one of the cases. Before she could grasp the second case and the hat-box in her other hand they were picked up by the man behind her. 'Allow me, please.' He had only a small case himself. Martha smiled

briefly and automatically, and went before him through the barrier.

Her mother was already speeding down the platform. She got to the far end of the train and then hurried back, peering in this compartment and that. But the customary vacillations and changes in choice of seat were unusually cut short by the man. 'This looks a nice clean compartment,' he announced, and opened a door.

As he stood aside for her mother to get in, Martha looked at him for the first time. He was middle-aged, florid; he seemed pleasant and had a quiet, reassuring voice. Her mother, as ever, thrived on attention. Martha watched her preening herself; superintended vaguely the bestowal of the cases and hat-box, the coat and rug, the carrier, handbag, and umbrella; felt already that responsibility for her mother had passed temporarily out of her hands.

He was going to King's Cross, too. He would lift down the cases, and see that she met Alice all right. Only too pleased. Anything he could do . . .

Martha stood on the platform in the doorway. As usual *that* was all right. Most people were kind to age and helplessness, and Mother always managed to find someone to help her. Every year it was the same. Before the journey was over this unknown would know all about Alice and Fred, about her and Peterborough Street and Carvers. If he cared to listen, he could know all about Alice's dead baby and Fred's four-figure income, about her own wilful refusal to leave Carvers and better herself, about the horrid people who had moved into No. 40 opposite, about—

THE carriage gave a slight shudder. The engine had backed on. She looked back at the big clock. She leaned in and interrupted the already-flowing conversation. 'Now, Mother, don't forget. The sandwiches and flask and milk are in the carrier. The sugar's in a screw of paper at the bottom. There's two magazines and your book and your knitting. You've put your ticket away safely? Give it to Alice when you meet her and she'll tear off the return half and look after it. And the postcard for you to post to me is in the front of your book—it's stamped and everything. If you or Alice remember to put it in the station box I'll

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know you're all right before I leave home in the morning.'

Before she left home in the morning! If she ever got there to-night! The leaden tiredness flowing in her veins and the gimlet headache over her right eye struggled to master her. She fought them down, and as a porter walked towards her along the platform closing doors she leaned in and pulled her mother to her for a long kiss and hug. She prayed passionately and incoherently over her in the few seconds their lips were together, and stepped back to the platform with foolish unwanted tears in her eyes. She saw the man looking curiously at her, and from her to her mother. He would soon know all about her, all about them.

A flurry of whistles and flag-waving, a shout or two, a touch of her mother's hand as it rested on the open window—and the train was moving out of the station, slowly and jerkily, faster . . .

She stood still, waving, already unable to distinguish the particular window, soon

unable to make out the carriage, at last only waving to a retreating red light.

She turned and walked down the platform. The little engine bustled past her, savouring its release from imprisonment with a scurrying run after the vanishing train.

She gave up her platform-ticket at the barrier and walked slowly out of the station. As she passed through the grimy ornamental archway into the street her pitiful pretences deserted her. She could not go on filling her mind with evasive excuses. It was not the tiredness, nor her headache, nor anxiety for her mother on the journey—none of these really worried her, nor the unwanted relief of being alone.

Alone!

She began to hurry, desperately—to Carvers, to her wage-sheet, to habits and the reassuring familiarities.

It was always the same, every year, at this first moment of real aloneness. She could no longer keep herself from thinking of that other Journey . . .

Nicht

*Gane is the sun wi' his gethered gowd
Intil the deeps o' the darklin' sea.
Smoorin' the yird wi' her steichlie shroud
Nicht comes wa'kin' eerillie.
But heich fae the lift the spendrif moon
Draps siller doon.*

*Lik mirky fing'rs athort the moor,
The lang broon shaddas o' sleepin' trees
Sprallach; an' fauldii's ilka flooer
That gya its hert tae the reivin' bees;
An' the win that's harried the clouds sin daw
Is dwined awa.*

*Hushed is the yird in a daithlik swoon.
Leaves, air-recshlin', are lang syne still:
The shuiffie's silent, its blithesome tune
Flawn wi' the win's, ayont the hill.
But the burn that jined in their daft refrain
Sings on, its lane.*

*Burd alane in the quaiet o' nicht,
I fin' Time droonin' in Eternity;
An' mirk's but a cloot tae heild the licht
That's sib til Immortality:
An heich in the lift the guerdian moon
Luiks kindlie doon.*

ELIZABETH T. DAWSON.

Science at Your Service

MATS FOR THE CAR

A BRITISH company manufactures interior car-mats in sets of four or in pairs. These mats are die-punched to size from a composite material made from cork and rubber, the rubber in the mixture acting as a bonding agent. The material has the characteristics of cork, but with added softness and pliability. The mats are washable and do not crack when bent. They are available in black or in natural cork colour. Their working-life is far longer than that of carpet or other floor-covering material. A useful feature is that the sets of mats are made in a wide range of sizes to fit all popular makes of cars. The purchaser, when ordering, quotes the type-number relevant to his car, including, of course, variations for year and H.P., and the mats supplied will fit without any cutting. Pre-war and post-war car models are catered for.

ELECTRIC FIRE-LIGHTER

A new appliance for lighting coal or coke fires is based on the power-point for heat supply. It is claimed that it will light a coal fire in seven to ten minutes and coke fires in a little longer. The element is in the form of a flat spiral and it should be inserted so that one layer of coal lies below it and another on top of it. When the fuel is alight, the fire-lighter should be switched off, but it should be left in position for a minute or two in order that its stored heat continue to assist the kindling of the fire. The appliance will operate for 200 to 240 volts, A.C. or D.C., and consumes 960 watts. It is 17 inches in length, and is supplied with flex. It remains to be seen whether an electrical fire-lighter will compete with the established gas-fed lighters, but in any case there are many rooms to-day with power-points close to open fires but without gas-points.

A WATER-TAP DEVELOPMENT

Exhibited for the first time at this year's British Industries Fair, a new range of domestic water-taps fitted with combined

covers and cross-tops attracted considerable interest. Made in black or ivory plastics, the cover shields the entire headwork of the tap and is fluted at the top for easy finger-control. A desirable feature is that the easy removal of the cover provides ready access to the headwork. The 'hot' and 'cold' indicator-buttons on the covers are interchangeable, an arrangement that should appeal to hardware shopkeepers and merchants. The introduction of plastics into part of the water-tap's construction will also save scarce metals, and it is already stated that the fittings with this new cover are in better supply than their all-metal counterpart. It should be said that the new fittings are only obtainable as complete units, and that loose covers are not available for fixing to existing taps.

RENOVATING DAMAGED BOLTS

So long as steel scarcity persists, or in any case as long as steel remains high in price, it will be desirable for factories not to scrap bolts whose threads have become damaged. One method, of course, is to cut away the section of damaged thread, but this is a dubious economy since it weakens the bolt. A precision-made tool that remakes the original thread is now available. This appliance has two arms. The lower arm carries a series of half-circular thread-cutting holes and the damaged bolt is placed in the appropriate section; the other arm is then swung round into the upper position, and as this arm carries a similar series of semicircular holes the circumference of the bolt is thus completely enclosed. A simple screw-clamp fitting is then pushed over to tighten the hold of the two arms on the bolt. By withdrawing the bolt from its tightly-held position, using a spanner, the thread is reconditioned. Virtually, a new thread is rolled on to the bolt. Each bolt reconditioner has sections to take bolts of the following sizes: $\frac{1}{8}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{3}{8}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{5}{8}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{7}{8}$, 1 , $1\frac{1}{8}$, $1\frac{1}{4}$, $1\frac{1}{2}$, $1\frac{3}{4}$, 2 , $2\frac{1}{4}$, $2\frac{1}{2}$, 3 , and 4 inches. There are two standard models made, one for Whitworth threads and one for B.S.F. threads.

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AIRCRAFT NOISE

Although noise abatement is being given much attention in modern towns and in industry, the problem of noise from aircraft is seldom discussed. It may be for most people an intermittent problem, but for those who live near busy airports or aerodromes there is little respite. The new propulsion systems now increasingly used have greatly intensified the noise nuisance; familiarity may have brought a high degree of immunity in the past, but this becomes less likely as each advance in aircraft design seems to increase the amount of noise emitted. In America an attempt to face this new problem has been made by the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. Unfortunately it must be reported that the investigations found that there was no easy or inexpensive solution in sight at present.

The main causes of noise are three—the propellers, the engine exhaust, and the turbulence in the air generated by the movement of the aircraft. Propeller noise can be reduced by using more blades and decreasing the revolution speed reached by the blade-tips. However, reductions obtainable by these means are relatively insignificant if the blade-tips are in any case revolving at supersonic velocities. The exhaust noise is often as loud as the propeller noise, although it does not increase with rising engine-speed as severely. On the other hand, there seems even less hope of minimising this source of noise. It is felt that little benefit would be derived from efforts to reduce propeller noise unless at the same time practical reductions in exhaust noise could also be secured. In short, this is a modern difficulty not likely to be overcome by science in the near future. The solution—if any—must be found in human adaptability. In these defence-conscious times perhaps the frequency of aircraft noise will act as a form of consolation to the heavily-burdened tax-payer.

GLASS LIDS FOR SAUCEPANS

Housewives are likely to welcome a new development in cooking equipment—lids made of heat-resistant glass which can be fitted to saucepans, thus enabling the progress of cooking to be inspected without the trouble of constant lid-lifting. A set of three lids, 6, 7, and 8 inches in diameter, is now marketed at a reasonable price by one of the leading makers of heat-resistant glassware. The lids may also be purchased separately.

AN ELECTRIC PAINT-STRIPPER

A compact appliance for stripping paint is in effect a small reflector-type electric-fire that can be safely and comfortably manipulated by an easy-grip handle. The flex runs through the handle and is, appropriately for this kind of appliance, of the three-core type for connection with a three-point earth-including power-plug. The paint-stripper has a rating of 600 watts. When using the stripper, the closeness of the heat to the paint surface can be controlled by adjustable guides at the sides of the reflector; the paint surface, when blistered, can be removed by a scraper or knife, in the same way that burnt paint is removed after blowlamp treatment. The appliance is supplied with four yards of flex and is guaranteed for twelve months. It is not high-priced and should prove a wise investment for householders who to-day are increasingly carrying out their own internal redecorations.

A MEDICAL ADVANCE

Growth process depends upon cell division, and the influences that cause cells to divide and then pursue their separate developments are still only darkly understood. Important progress may have been made by research workers at the University of Illinois. An extract from embryo or unborn chicks, applied to cells taken from bone marrow, has been found to make cells divide for as long as twelve to fourteen days. It is believed that cell division has never been maintained outside the living body for as long a period as this; but only minute amounts of the extract are required to achieve this. It is inferred, therefore, that the substance or substances that cause cell division to take place are contained in the extract. The preparation of larger quantities of this extract may enable the cell-dividing factor to be isolated. If this can be done, at least two highly important fields of disease treatment may be significantly advanced. Wound-healing depends upon the growth of new tissue, and, if cell division could be stimulated, healing would be accelerated in many difficult cases. The second field is that of cancer or malignant growths; here the problem is that of abnormal cell division causing misplaced growth. The isolation and study of the natural substance that promotes cell division might shed entirely new light upon the problems of cancer treatment and the reduction of the disease's incidence.

ATOM-SPLITTING AND CANCER

The treatment of cancer by high-voltage X-rays is to-day well known; post-operative treatment and also the treatment of inoperably-positioned growths can often produce great benefits. The cost of the necessary plant is very high and the number of hospitals thus equipped is small; such hospitals are regional rather than local centres. It is possible that a waste-product from atomic energy reactors, or atomic piles, will eventually displace these expensive machines. When uranium-235 is split, more than 6 per cent of the uranium is converted into the element caesium. In the radioactive form in which it is produced, this by-product caesium emits rays that are roughly equivalent in energy to those of the million-volt X-ray machines. Radiation units based upon the radioactive caesium will cost only a fraction of what the large hospital plants now in use cost, and the units will last for more than twenty years without maintenance outlay. In America processes to separate the caesium from other reactor by-products are now being developed; when the material is available in sufficient amount, the new cancer-treatment units are expected to be produced in large number.

Quite apart from the economic advantages of caesium units, the possibility that many more centres of treatment could eventually be set up is of enormous importance. So long as high-voltage radiation treatment can be given at only a limited number of places, patients who are sometimes already in poor health must expend reserves of energy and nervous resistance upon journeys from their homes or must become in-patients of hospitals, thus adding to the demand for beds. A vastly increased number of treatment centres could bring considerable improvement in the results of this valuable method of reducing cancer's mortality.

FIGHTING THE COLORADO BEETLE

Long and well established on the Continent, the Colorado beetle is a devastating pest of the potato crop and it has made many efforts to gain a foothold in England. We are not

protected merely because the English Channel and the North Sea divide us from Europe. So far the battle has been won by public vigilance and a well-designed campaign of preventive measures. The most likely regions of invasion are Kent, southern Essex, much of Surrey, parts of the other Home Counties, and one small area of Norfolk surrounding the port of King's Lynn. These are classified as 'protected' areas and the potato crops in them are regularly sprayed or dusted with DDT. These operations are mainly carried out by one leading commercial company in our agricultural chemical industry on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture. Last year, in all, over 27,000 acres of potatoes were thus sprayed or dusted with DDT as a precaution. In addition, whenever a Colorado beetle incident is reported and confirmed emergency spraying operations are conducted in the suspect area. This in 1951 involved the spraying of 470 acres and the dusting of 155 acres. The success of this campaign is shown by the facts that in 1950 170 single Colorado beetles and 29 breeding colonies were found, but careful examinations in 1951 showed that all the colonies had been eradicated; in 1951 only 8 new breeding colonies were found and none of these were on the areas regularly sprayed as a precaution.

The public's part in these measures is most important. The speedy reporting of beetles or grubs suspiciously resembling this pest is essential. One of the main avenues of invasion is by cross-Channel ship and in produce imported from Europe, and here, too, the vigilance of captains and crews has been a major factor in keeping Britain free from infestation. It is not entirely correct to assume that England alone is vulnerable; in 1951 four beetles were found in Scotland, one being traced to a car that had come from France, one to imported produce, and two to ships that had previously called at Continental ports. Indeed, with the geographically vulnerable areas of England now regularly sprayed, the remaining risk of Colorado beetle establishment is associated with the less likely parts of Britain.

TO CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.

Establishing the Rock-Garden

AS this is quite a good time of the year for planting out numbers of Alpines in the rock-garden, it may be as well to deal with this fascinating form of gardening. The choice of site for a rock-garden naturally differs, but the great idea is to have it where the plants can be viewed to the best advantage and where they will get the maximum of sun. Do not plant the Alpines in the shade of a tree, because they will hate the drip from the branches, they will loathe the falling of the dead leaves in the autumn, and the soil itself will be robbed by the tree-roots.

If there should happen to be any undulation in the garden, and the place is sunny, this spot is ideal, for the rocks can be placed there and height and depth obtained without any artificiality. Remember that a rock-garden should always be as natural as possible and should not be just a heap of soil with rocks thrown on. Study the rocks to make certain they are being placed in the right position, and here the detailed illustrations in my *A B C of the Rock Garden and Pool* should be useful.

Having made the garden, we must, of course, consider planting it up. Be sure you have some idea of the appearance of the full-grown plants before you put them in and then you will be able to have them in the positions where they will be seen to the best advantage. The 'pockets' in which the plants are to grow can be improved by the addition of sedge-peat and coarse silver-sand. The plants that like lime-free soil must have special pockets made up for them in cases where the normal soil of the garden is known to be chalky.

Most nurserymen grow their Alpine plants

in pots these days, and the reader should take care to buy small plants with really big roots, rather than big plants with tiny roots. Make a hole with a trowel where the plants are to be put in, pop the ball of soil containing the roots into position having loosened it slightly at the base, and then firm well. If the weather is dry fill the hole with water first and then apply a little more water in a few days' time to help the plants get firmly established.

If you are a beginner at rock-gardening, concentrate on the obliging plants that are easy to grow, and thus you will be encouraged by your early successes. Do not be the kind of snob who looks down on the cheery plant that co-operates with the gardener and gives a whole-hearted display of colour. I like a rock-garden that needs ruthless cutting back to avoid overcrowding. This is much gayer than a garden full of sulky little plants which demand to be coaxed at all times.

The following can be planted at this season. The yellow alyssum, which should flower from April to July; the aubrietia, with its blues, mauves, pinks, and reds, which will be colourful in April and May; varieties of armeria, which can be had as reds, whites, or pinks, which are usually beautiful from May to August; Phlox subulata in whites, mauves, and pinks, at their best in May and June; as well as veronicas, sedums, polygonum, saxifrages, gypsophila, baby geums, and corydalis.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

Orders for the Month

Flowers.—Plant out layered carnations, and numerous Alpines in the rock-garden; also the winter-beding forget-me-nots, sweet williams, wallflowers, Canterbury bells. Cut down dahlias and store roots in frostproof shed. Prepare a site for roses.

Fruit.—Pick apples and pears carefully and store separately. Grease-band the orchard trees. Lift and root-prune peach-trees making too much growth. Order new varieties of raspberry-canes, such as Malling Notable, Malling Jewel, and Malling Promise.

Vegetables.—Start to blanch the endives. Cut the well-ripened marrows and store. Soot the Brussels sprouts. Hoe the August-sown onions lightly. Lift the carrots and store. Lift potatoes and make storing buries or clamps. Cut down the foliage of asparagus when yellow.

Greenhouse.—Pot up the later-flowering hyacinths and tulips and bury in sand or peat out of doors for eight or nine weeks. Spray chrysanthemums and cinerarias with nicotine against leaf-miner. Disbud carnations. Pinch out growing-points of clarkias and schizanthus when 4 inches high.

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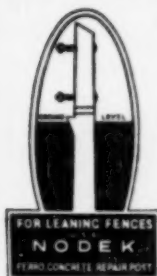
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